









THE POCKET BOOK OF  
BRITISH BIRDS



# *The Pocket Book of British Birds*

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*By Richard Keurton, F.Z.S.  
and Howard Bentham*

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*With 191 Illustrations  
from Photographs*



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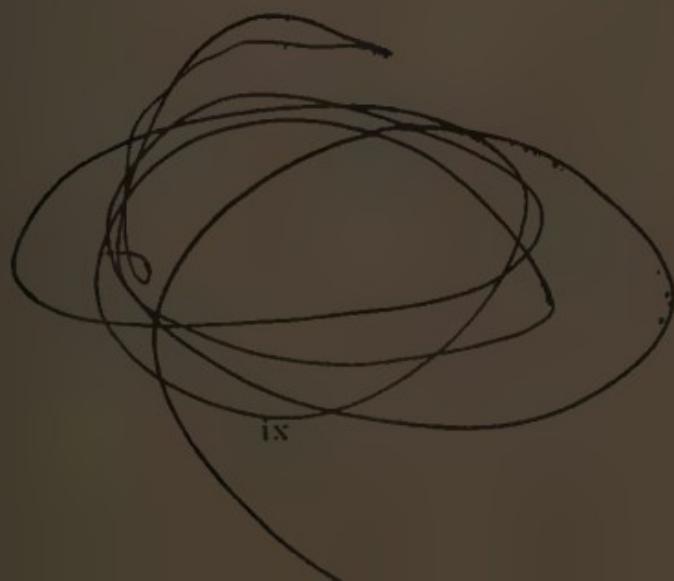
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# THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

## INTRODUCTION

MORE than twenty years ago an old lady friend, who was a great lover of wild birds, suggested that I should prepare a little pocket book for the use of people who did not know much about the subject, but who were anxious to learn something more of our feathered friends whilst out for a country ramble.

I have repeatedly turned the idea over in my mind without finding an opportunity of carrying it into effect, but fortunately my son-in-law, Mr. Howard Bentham, has come upon the scene to assist me, and the text of this work is the result of his knowledge, methodical care and industry.

Every ornithologist in the land is frequently asked by both friends and strangers to name some wild bird seen or heard. This is a very difficult task, especially when the inquiry comes from a person who is, in the first place, not a trained observer, and in the second does not possess the faculty of accurate verbal or literary description.

The ambition of the authors has been to produce a handy guide book at once simple, terse, up-to-date and reliable. These helpful characteristics, supplemented by a lavish use of accurate reproductions of photographs taken direct from Nature, will, they hope, enable any student possessing a pair of good field-glasses to identify not only our breeding birds, but most of the feathered visitors to our shores.

"The Pocket Book of British Birds" tells the reader how to identify winged dwellers to be seen and heard in gardens,

## INTRODUCTION

hedgerows, woods and meadows; on ponds, lakes and rivers and by the seashore; on crag, moor and mountain-side. It describes where the birds breed, provided that their nesting haunts are in the British Isles, the materials used in the construction of the nest, the number of eggs laid, their size, coloration, and leading characteristics.

Where two species bear a confusing resemblance in appearance, notes or habits, their points of difference are described with a succinctness and emphasis which cannot fail to prove helpful.

The work has been written not only from experience gained by a life-long study of birds in this and other countries, but the best and latest authorities have been consulted, and we gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to the authors and editors of the "Practical Handbook of British Birds," "The British Bird Book" and "The Birds of the British Isles" (T. A. Coward). We have also gleaned much useful information from the pages of *British Birds*, Mr. H. F. Witherby's monthly periodical.

This little work it is believed contains the most complete collection of photographs of British birds ever brought within the covers of a small volume, the majority of which have been taken by Captain Cherry Kearton, my son, Mr. John Kearton, and myself. In the case of illustrations which have been obtained from other sources, the names of the respective photographers have been printed beneath the pictures for which they are responsible, and to these workers we wish to express our best thanks for the readiness with which they have kindly supplied our wants.

It has been stated that there are too many bird books, but provided that these are of the right kind, this is impossible in view of the fact that so many people confess their inability to distinguish a Swallow from a House-Martin.

RICHARD KEARTON.

## RAVEN

*Corvus corax*

**Description.**—*Male.* The entire plumage is black, with a purplish blue gloss. Legs and bill black. The beak is massive and curved, with a decided hook. Irides deep brown. Length, about 26 inches. *Female.* Slightly smaller, otherwise resembles male. *Young.* Similar to adults, but less glossy.



Photo: A. Brook

### Distribution.—

Resident. Breeds in a few places along the south coast of England from the Isle of Wight to Cornwall, and in North Devon, also in the Lake District, in North Somerset and the Isle of Man. In some of the mountainous parts of Wales, in the wilder districts of the Scottish mainland,

and on many of the islands, the Raven still nests quite commonly. In Ireland it breeds on the rocky portions of the coast, and on some inland cliffs, especially in the west.

**Habits.**—This fine bird, although now practically banished from all but the mountainous districts and sea-cliffs, when less persecuted, frequented many inland localities, even in the lowlands. It is the largest of the *Corvidæ*, and may be distinguished from the Carrion-Crow, the only bird with which it is likely to be confused, by its larger size, more rounded tail, and deep distinctive croak. The bird is greatly attached to an old haunt, to which it will return year after year for breeding purposes, the nest often being commenced

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

or repaired very early in the year. When much concerned for the safety of its eggs or young, the Raven will angrily tear up grass or heather, or drive its powerful beak into branches, scattering the splinters in all directions. Incubation is performed by both sexes.

**Food.**—The Raven is mainly omnivorous, feeding largely on carrion, although it will attack wounded or weakly sheep, lambs or birds. It also consumes eggs, fruit, grain and insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In crevices and on ledges of more or less inaccessible sea or inland cliffs, occasionally in trees or ruins. A bulky structure. *Materials.* Sticks, heather stalks, dry seaweed, and roots, solidified with earth, to which is added a liberal lining of wool, hair, grass, fur or bracken.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6, more rarely 3 or 7. Greyish or bluish green, blotched, splashed, and spotted with varying shades of brown, and sometimes a few black spots occur. The underlying markings are ash-grey or greyish purple. Occasionally almost devoid of markings. *Size.* About  $1\cdot95 \times 1\cdot3$  inches. *Time.* February and March.

**Note.**—A deep croak, sounding something like *pruk*, *glog*, or *whow*.

### HOODED CROW

*Corvus cornix*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, throat, wings and tail are glossy bluish black. Nape, back, rump and under parts slaty grey. Bill and legs black. Irides dusky. Length, about 20 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Similar to adults, but black parts less glossy, and the grey parts dusky.

**Distribution.**—Resident, also autumn and winter visitor. Nests commonly in the north and north-west of Scotland, and on many of the islands, and very occasionally in the south-east. In Ireland it breeds in every county. Elsewhere in British Isles it occurs as an autumn and winter visitor, chiefly along the east and south coasts of England,

## HOODED CROW

and although of not infrequent appearance inland as far as the Midlands, is very rare in the west and in Wales. Resident in the Isle of Man.

**Habits.**—The Hooded Crow arrives in great numbers on the east coasts of Great Britain in autumn, these birds reaching us from Scandinavia and Central Europe. The return movement takes place from about mid-March to late in April. Where both Carrion- and Hooded Crows occur during the nesting season, the two species sometimes interbreed. In winter the Hoodie or Grey Crow is mainly a bird of the shore, frequenting low-lying portions of the coast as well as the sea-cliffs, but in the breeding season it resorts chiefly to wild, hilly or mountainous districts, rocky coasts and islands. The bird is more gregarious than the Carrion-Crow, and may be observed in flocks both in winter and summer.

**Food.**—Carrion, small birds and mammals, shell-fish, grubs, insects, fruit, grain, and birds' eggs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On sea or inland cliffs, and in tall trees. Less frequently in a bush, or on the ground, amongst long heather. A bulky structure.

*Materials.* Sticks, heather or seaweed externally, the inside being composed of twigs and turf, to which is added a final lining of wool, roots, moss, feathers or hair.

**Eggs.**—4 or 5, rarely 6. Greyish green or bluish, spotted and blotched with various shades of olive-brown and ashy grey. *Size.* About 1·65 × 1·2 inches. *Time.* March to June.

**Notes.**—A hoarse *cra* or *carruck*. In spring the bird utters a few notes less harsh in sound.



Hooded Crow (Young)

## CARRION-CROW

*Corvus corone*

**Description.**—*Male.* Whole of plumage black, with purple and green reflections. Bill and legs black, irides dusky. Length, about 18 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Similar to adults, except that the plumage is less glossy.



Carrion-Crows (Young)

**Distribution.**—Resident. In England and Wales the Carrion-Crow is common but somewhat local, being most abundant in districts where game-preserving is not extensively carried on. In Scotland more local, most numerous in the south and east, and only a very occasional visitor to the treeless islands. Very rare in Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Carrion-Crow, during the

nesting season, is to be found on the outskirts of woods and plantations, in well-timbered parks, on farm-lands where the hedgerows contain tall trees, on the edges of heaths and moors, among rocky uplands, or along sea-cliffs. Although not so gregarious as the Hooded Crow, in winter small parties of this species may often be observed, and at this season considerable numbers sometimes congregate at roosting time. In the summer months, however, except for occasional small gatherings where food is abundant, Carrion-Crows do not exhibit social tendencies, each pair nesting apart, and not in colonies like the Rook. It should, however, be borne in mind that isolated nesting pairs of Rooks

## ROOK

are not very exceptional, so that care must be exercised in identifying birds at their breeding-places.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the Raven.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally placed high up in trees in inland localities, but sometimes at no great height from the ground when in little frequented districts. Also found on ledges of sea-cliffs, occasionally in bushes, and rarely on the ground in treeless country. *Materials.* Sticks and mud, with a lining of grass, wool, fibres and hair.

**Eggs.**—Generally 4 or 5, rarely 6. In coloration they closely resemble eggs of the Raven, but are smaller. *Size.* About  $1\cdot65 \times 1\cdot2$  inches. *Time.* April and May.

**Note.**—A harsh *craar*, sometimes almost a bark. Far harsher than the note of the Rook.

## ROOK

*Corvus frugilegus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Uniform black, glossed with purple and blue. At the base of the bill is a tract of bare greyish white skin, which at once distinguishes this bird from the Carrion-Crow. Bill and legs are black, irides dark brown. Length, about 19 inches. *Female.* Slightly smaller and duller. *Young.* Base of bill feathered and plumage browner, with little gloss.



Rook

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Young Rooks may be distinguished from Carrion-Crows by the more slender and less decurved bill.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Generally distributed and common almost throughout the British Isles. Breeds both in the Outer Hebrides and Orkneys, but is only a visitor to the Shetlands.

**Habits.**—Large flocks of Rooks arrive in autumn on the east coast from the Humber southwards, spreading inland in all directions. They return to the breeding-grounds in Central Europe from early February to mid-April. Smaller autumn flocks also arrive in the Orkneys and Shetlands from Scandinavia, spreading southwards as far as the northern counties of England, to return in March or April. Some of our breeding birds appear to emigrate from Great Britain to Ireland in autumn, and in spring flocks from the Continent arrive on the south-east coast passing northwards. The Rook is gregarious, and its nesting colonies or rookeries are often of considerable size. In winter birds from several of these communities will resort to a common roosting-place, which sometimes harbours thousands of birds. Long before the advent of spring, Rooks gather occasionally in their nesting trees, these visits becoming more frequent as the season advances. The majority of nests are constructed or the old structures renovated during the month of March. The rookeries are usually situated close to human habitations, and many are in towns, or on their outskirts. Rooks are much attached to an old breeding place, to which they will resort year after year in spite of the spread of bricks and mortar.

**Food.**—Worms, slugs, insects, grain, molluscs and small mammals. Occasionally eggs and young birds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually in the tops of tall trees, exceptionally in or between chimney-pots, rarely in bushes or hedges. Many nests are often built in one tree. *Materials.* Sticks and twigs, strengthened with earth; lined with roots, grass, wool and other soft substances.

## JACKDAW

**Eggs.**—3 to 6. Pale green, spotted and blotched with olive-brown. **Size.** About 1·68 × 1·18 inches. **Time.** March and April.

**Note.**—*Craaw*, subject to modulations. At times it reaches such a high pitch as to become almost a scream.

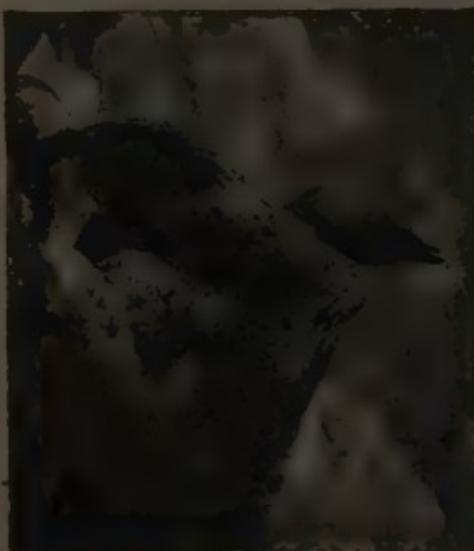
## JACKDAW

*Colœus monedula*

**Description.**—*Male.* General colour black, with a blue gloss on the upper parts; nape and back of neck leaden grey. Bill and legs black; irides greyish white. Length, about 14 inches. *Female.* Similar, except that grey on back of neck less pronounced. *Young.* Browner than adults, grey on back of neck scarcely noticeable.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Generally distributed and common except in north-west of Scotland and in the Shetlands, being rare or absent from these localities, although abundant in the Orkneys. Does not nest in the western isles of Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Jackdaw is an abundant species in wooded country and park-lands, especially where the timber is old and decayed; but is equally at home on sea-cliffs and inland crags, about ruins, churches and other buildings providing sufficient nesting accommodation. In autumn many winter visitors arrive



Jackdaw

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

from the Continent, while at the same season birds have been observed leaving our south coasts. This species is sociable at all times of the year, and wherever there is available accommodation, nests in large colonies. It also associates with Rooks in winter, and to a lesser extent during the breeding season. The Jackdaw is very partial to the destructive leather-jacket, in which respect it must be considered a useful species, but on account of its fondness for eggs and young birds, it is sometimes regarded as very harmful.

**Food.**—Insects, worms, grubs, eggs, young birds, and occasionally fruit and grain.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In holes in sea or inland cliffs, trees, ruins or chalk-pits, also in church towers and chimney-pots. Open nests are sometimes built in trees, occasionally in rookeries. *Materials.* Sticks, lined with wool, fur, straw, dry grass, moss, feathers and other soft material. Some nests are entirely without sticks.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6, rarely 7. Pale greenish blue or bluish white, spotted, speckled and blotched with dark olive-brown and ash-grey. Sometimes spots nearly black.

Some eggs are boldly marked, others are finely speckled.  
*Size.* About  $1\cdot45 \times 1\cdot0$  inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—Jack, kae or daw.

## MAGPIE

*Pica pica*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck, upper breast and back black, with a green, violet and blue sheen. Wings black, glossed with green, the inner webs of the primaries are white, as are also the scapulars, lower breast, belly and flanks. The long wedge-shaped tail is black, with a glossy sheen. Legs, bill, thighs and under tail-coverts black. Irides hazel. Length, about 18 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. Black

## MAGPIE

parts sooty, without much gloss, otherwise plumage resembles that of adult.

**Distribution.**—Resident. In England and Wales generally distributed, except in East Anglia, where it is now rare. In Scotland very scarce in north and north-west, and local elsewhere. Abundant in Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Magpie, although it must be classed as a woodland species, is not nearly so partial to dense cover as the Jay, being often seen in comparatively open country, and at times it will wander to quite treeless coastal regions, where these are not far distant from its nesting haunts. Always most numerous in areas where there is little or no game-preserving, it has during recent years increased greatly in many districts, and spread to localities where it was unknown for many years before the war. In winter the Magpie is gregarious, gathering in small flocks at its feeding and roosting places, and at pairing time, in early spring, much larger numbers collect together. When in the open this bird is decidedly wary, and if alarmed will immediately seek the shelter of the nearest cover, or alight among the topmost branches of some tall tree, commanding a good outlook over the immediate surroundings.

**Food.**—Young birds, eggs, worms, insects, small mammals, grain, acorns.



Photo: H. Morrey Salmon

Magpie

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally near the top of a tall tree, but sometimes in thick hedges, thorn-bushes or small trees. *Materials.* Sticks and twigs form the foundation, these being cemented together with mud or clay. The lining consists of fine roots, and occasionally hair. Generally surmounted with a dome of thorny sticks. A bulky structure.

**Eggs.**—5 to 8, occasionally up to 10. Dirty bluish green or yellowish brown, spotted, freckled and blotched with various shades of greyish or greenish brown. *Size.* About  $1\cdot35 \times .95$  inches. *Time.* March to May.

**Notes.**—A loud chatter or harsh squawk.

### NUTCRACKER

*Nucifraga caryocatactes*

**Description.**—*Male.* General colour is chocolate-brown, conspicuously spotted with white, except on the crown and nape. Wings and tail blackish brown, the latter broadly edged with white. Under tail-coverts white. Bill dark brown; legs black; irides hazel. Length, about  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Sexes alike.*

**Distribution.**—Rare autumn and winter visitor, chiefly to southern and eastern counties of England. Vagrant elsewhere.

### JAY

*Garrulus glandarius*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown greyish white, streaked with black, the feathers forming an erectile crest. Nape, cheeks, sides of neck, back and breast reddish fawn, tail brownish black. Chin, throat, belly, under tail-coverts and rump white. A black moustachial streak runs downwards from the base of the bill. Wings black and white, the coverts showing alternate bars of pale blue, bright blue, and black. Bill dusky; legs brown; irides bluish white. Length, about 15

## JAY

inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. Duller, the irides brown, the crown spotted instead of streaked.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Generally distributed, except in Scotland and Ireland, where it is very local. Does not occur in the Isle of Man. A few immigrants from the Continent reach us in autumn.

**Habits.**—Despite an incessant war waged upon the Jay by the gamekeeper, this bird has held its own far more successfully than the Magpie, its wary nature and fondness for dense woodlands, perhaps having contributed to the maintenance of its numbers. Locally quite abundant in pre-war times, recently the species has increased considerably owing to a decline in game-preserving. The harsh screeching cry of this feathered sentry of the woods gives warning to all the bird inhabitants on the approach of danger, but although usually a noisy bird, at the nest, or in its vicinity, the loud alarm note is rarely heard. After the young have vacated the nest, they are closely attended by the parent birds, the woods then resounding with discordant notes. The Jay appears to be attached to a favourite breeding site, to which it will return year after year, a fresh nest being constructed each season.

**Food.**—Acorns, nuts, peas, eggs, small birds or rodents, fruit, grain and larvae.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In the fork of a bush or tree, generally from 10 to 20 feet from the ground, but occasionally at much greater elevations. In woods, plantations, on wooded commons, in thick hedgerows containing old thorn-bushes.



Jay

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Materials.** Small sticks and twigs, lined neatly with fine rootlets, occasionally with grasses or horsehair.

**Eggs.**—4 to 7. Pale brownish or greyish green, sometimes bluish, thickly freckled all over with light olive-brown, and often showing a few black hair-streaks at the larger end. **Size.** About 1·25 × ·9 inches. **Time.** April to June.

**Notes.**—A harsh *rake* or *raark*. Sometimes an even more discordant *craarr*. Will mimic birds' notes and other sounds.

**Song.** A few soft not unmusical notes.

### CHOUGH

*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

**Description.**—*Male.* Uniform glossy purple-black. Bill and legs bright coral red; claws black; irides hazel. The

bill is slightly curved downwards. Length, about 16 inches. *Sexes alike* in plumage, but female smaller. *Young.* Similar to adults, but bill and legs dull orange.

#### DISTRIBUTION. — Resident.

Breeds on portions of south-west coast of England, on parts of Welsh coasts, in the Isle of Man and in a few inland localities in Wales, at one or two points on the mainland of south-west Scotland, and in some of the Inner Hebrides. In Ireland nests on many sea-cliffs, especially on the western side, and on a few inland cliffs.



Photo: Sydney H. Smith

Chough

**Habits.**—The Chough is unfortunately rapidly decreasing, many of its old haunts being now untenanted. The increase

## STARLING

of Jackdaws is considered to be largely the cause of the diminution in the numbers of the less assertive species, but egg-collectors have also contributed to the decline. Choughs are seldom, if ever, found breeding in colonies, although they may sometimes be observed in flocks even in the nesting season. They appear, like many other members of the *Corvidæ* family, to be much attached to an old nesting site, which will be utilized year after year, a habit no doubt of considerable assistance to the egg-collector. If kept in confinement, this bird becomes a tame and interesting pet, and has been known to collect and hide various objects after the manner of a Magpie or Jackdaw. A bird of sedentary habits, the Chough rarely wanders far from its breeding places. It is considered to be a life-paired species. The flight is described as buoyant and easy.

**Food.**—Insects, molluscs, worms, crustaceans, grain and berries.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Holes or crevices in cliffs, often in fissures or on ledges in caves, and occasionally in ruined buildings. *Material.* Sticks, roots or heather stalks, lined with wool, dry grass, hair or fibrous roots.

**Eggs.**—3 to 5, rarely 6. Dirty white, cream colour or pale brownish, spotted and speckled with varying shades of brown and underlying markings of ash-grey. *Size.* About  $1\cdot52 \times 1\cdot1$  inches. *Time.* Late April and May.

**Notes.**—*Creea* and *tchuff*.

## STARLING

*Sturnus vulgaris*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck and upper parts black, glossed with purple, green and blue. Feathers of head and neck slightly tipped with buff; the back, rump and upper tail-coverts showing larger buff spots. Wing and

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

tail-quills greyish black, edged with buffish white. Breast and belly black, with a purple and blue sheen; vent and under tail-coverts black, spotted with buffish white. Bill yellow; irides brown; legs reddish brown. Length, about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Female.* Plumage rather less brilliant. Bill duller. In winter the feathers of both sexes are tipped with buff and white, giving a general spotted appearance, and the bill becomes dull brown. *Young.* Greyish brown, the throat and abdomen dirty white. After the autumn moult the plumage becomes spotted.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Generally distributed. Numerous throughout the British Isles, except in some parts of Ireland.

**Habits.**—Many Starlings are resident with us throughout the year, but to what extent these remain in their breeding areas is uncertain. Others leave us in autumn, to return in spring, and enormous numbers arrive from the Continent to spend the winter in our islands. These winter flocks are sometimes composed of many thousands of birds, and

may be joined by some of our residents, vast hordes congregating at chosen roosting-places in plantations, thickets of holly trees, reed-beds, or other situations affording security. Soon after the young have left the nest, family parties unite, and raids upon fruit crops by these early gatherings are often most harmful. Great numbers of Starlings resort to towns, villages and farmsteads during the nesting season, but many pairs breed in woods, fields, orchards, along sea-



Starling

## GOLDEN ORIOLE

cliffs or in other localities at some distance from habitations.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, small molluscs, fruit, and occasionally wheat. Although much damage is sometimes inflicted on the fruit crop, large numbers of injurious insects, wireworms, etc., are consumed.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In holes in trees, buildings or cliffs; amongst ivy, under eaves, in haystacks, nest-boxes, under boulders on the beach, amongst the foundation sticks of Rooks' or Magpies' nests. Nesting holes of Woodpeckers are often appropriated. *Materials.* Straw, hay or fibrous roots, lined with feathers, hair or wool. An untidy structure.

**Eggs.**—5 to 7. Uniform pale blue. Glossy. Sometimes nearly white. *Size.* About 1·18 × .84 inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A series of whistling and chuckling sounds, notes of other birds being often introduced in considerable variety. *Alarm.* Spate.

## GOLDEN ORIOLE

*Oriolus oriolus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Golden yellow above and below. Lores and wings black, the primaries, except the two outermost, edged, and secondaries and primary-coverts tipped with yellowish white. Tail golden yellow, with a wedge-shaped black patch in the centre. Bill dull red; legs slate-grey; irides bright red. Length, about 9 inches. *Female.* Much duller. Greenish yellow, the black replaced by dark brown; under parts whitish, streaked on the throat, breast and flanks with dark brown. *Young.* Similar to female, but greener and browner, and yellowish on the flanks. The streaks are fainter, and the bill brownish red.

**Distribution.**—Spring visitor, arriving annually in very small numbers in the south-east and south-west of England.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Elsewhere an irregular visitor, but has occurred in most English counties, less often in Scotland and Ireland. The bird has nested, or attempted to do so, in several of the southern and eastern counties of England, especially in Kent. It has also bred in Devon and Northants.

**Habits.**—This beautiful bird arrives on our southern shores from the end of April to mid-May, and although many Orioles which visit us are passage-migrants, the species would undoubtedly establish itself as a regular breeding bird in small numbers if unmolested. Unfortunately the brilliant colours of the male all too easily attract the attention of gunners. The Golden Oriole frequents the outskirts of woods, parks, large well-timbered gardens, plantations and thickets. Although often found near habitations the bird is extremely shy of observation, and rarely appears in view for long, seeking cover amongst the densest foliage.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, also fruit, especially cherries.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually suspended between the forked branches of a tree, preferably an oak, and generally near the end of a horizontal bough at a considerable height from the ground. *Materials.* Grasses, sedges, wool, strips of bark, and roots. The lining is composed of flowering grass heads. Most nests contain a little paper.

**Eggs.**—4 or 5. White or creamy, sparingly spotted with deep purplish brown. *Size.* About 1·21 x .84 inches. *Time.* June, sometimes late May.



*Photo: Monsieur A. Burdet*

**Golden Oriole (Female)**

## HAWFINCH

**Notes.**—*Call.* A clear flute-like whistle. The bird has a short melodious song.

## HAWFINCH

*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown and sides of head dull orange-brown; nape grey; back and scapulars chestnut; rump light orange-brown. Around the eye, at the base of the bill, and on the throat the feathers are black. Breast and belly pale rust-colour; vent and under tail-coverts greyish white; wings bluish black, showing a conspicuous white shoulder patch. Tail black, the outer quills tipped and edged with white, the central ones brown, tipped with white. The large conical bill is dusky blue in summer, yellowish horn or purplish brown in winter. Legs pale brown; irides greyish white. Length, about 7 inches. *Female.* Paler in colour, but otherwise resembles the male. *Young.* Breast and flanks pale tawny brown, spotted with dark brown. Throat buff; crown and nape yellowish brown, back pale chestnut.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Generally distributed in England, but local, becoming rarer in the north and west. Not known to breed in Cornwall. Rare or absent in West Wales, but resident in the eastern portion. In Scotland chiefly confined as a breeding species to the south-east, where it is not uncommon, and is rapidly spreading north-



Hawfinch (Young)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

wards. As a migrant has occurred as far north as the Shetlands. A rare wanderer to Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Hawfinch, although of shy and retiring habits, should be easily recognized even when in flight, by its stout build, short tail, and conspicuous white wing-patches, while the massive conical bill is a further aid to identification whenever a close view of the bird can be obtained. Woods, orchards, large gardens, plantations and wooded commons form the usual nesting haunts, but in winter a good deal of wandering is noticeable, the occurrence of the bird outside its breeding range at this season not being infrequent. After the young have been reared, family parties are much in evidence, and in winter the Hawfinch becomes more gregarious, although large flocks are exceptional.

**Food.**—Kernels of the hawthorn, cherry or plum, peas, seeds of yew, holly or hornbeam. The young are fed upon insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In old hawthorn bushes, fruit trees, oaks, hollies and other trees. *Materials.* A layer of twigs surrounding a cup of fibrous roots, grass and lichens, lined with fine rootlets, hair and dry grass.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Pale bluish or greyish green, or faint reddish brown, boldly streaked and spotted with dark olive-brown and grey. *Size.* About .95 x .75 inches. *Time.* End of April or in May, sometimes later.

**Notes.**—*Call.* *Tsip.* *Song.* A simple jingle, being a mixture of harsh and soft notes.

## GREENFINCH

*Chloris chloris*

**Description.**—*Male.* Yellowish green, brightest on the forehead, rump, throat and breast. Sides of head and neck greyish, as is also the belly. Wings slate-grey, shading to brownish black, margined with clear yellow.

Tail greyish olive, bright yellow at the base. Bill stout, conical, and flesh coloured. Legs pinkish brown; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches.

*Female.* Head and mantle browner, under parts olive-grey, tinged with green on the breast. Yellow parts duller. *Young.* More greyish, streaked above and below with brown.



Greenfinch

**Distribution.**—Resi-

sident and winter visitor. Generally distributed and locally common, but only a visitor to Shetlands and Outer Hebrides, except on Stornoway, where it breeds.

**Habits.**—During the breeding season the Greenfinch, or Green Linnet, frequents tall thick hedgerows, thickets, gardens, commons overgrown with bushes, downlands affording sufficient cover, shrubberies, and almost any locality where trees and tall bushes provide a suitable nesting site. In winter, although the haunts described are not entirely forsaken, flocks, often of considerable size, resort to more open country, where the birds frequently associate with other finches and buntings. Even when engaged in rearing a family, the Green Linnet exhibits a social tendency,

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

many pairs often nesting within a restricted area. Undoubtedly the farmer is greatly benefited by the presence of this species on the stubble and vegetable fields during winter, as great numbers of the seeds of injurious weeds are then consumed. Many Greenfinches leave our shores in autumn, returning in March, and others come to us as winter residents.

**Food.**—Seeds of various kinds and berries.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In thick whitethorn hedges. Gorse bushes, holly, ivy, yew trees, and other evergreens are frequently selected. At varying heights. *Materials.* Small twigs, grasses, moss, rootlets, and occasionally wool, lined with fine roots, hair, and sometimes feathers.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6, rarely 7. Dirty white or pale greenish blue, sparingly spotted with varying shades of reddish brown, and sometimes streaked at the larger end. Underlying markings pale violet or light red-brown. Usually may be distinguished from those of the Linnet, Twite and Goldfinch by larger size. *Size.* About .82 x .56 inches. *Time.* April to July, or even August.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A short twittering warble, often commencing with a long-drawn harsh note. Frequently uttered on the wing. *Call.* *Twe-e-er.* *Alarm.* A melancholy *tway*.

### GOLDFINCH

*Carduelis carduelis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead and chin rich scarlet, divided by a black line passing from the base of the bill to the eye; cheeks white. The black of the crown and back of head descends in a narrowing band to either side of the neck. Nape, back and rump pale tawny brown. Wings black, with a broad band of golden yellow, which is very conspicuous in flight. The wing-coverts are black and the primaries boldly tipped with white. Tail-quills black, marked with white

## GOLDFINCH

spots near the tips. Throat and under parts white, tinged on the breast and flanks with tawny brown. Bill and legs pinkish white; irides brown. The sexes differ but little. Length, about 5 inches. *Young.* Lack the red, white and black on the head. The back and breast are streaked with dark brown.

**Distribution.**— Resident and winter visitor. Generally distributed, except in the north of Scotland, where it is rare or local. To the Outer Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands a scarce vagrant. Has greatly increased in many localities during the last fifteen or twenty years.

**Habits.**— Although

many Goldfinches undoubtedly remain with us throughout the year, others leave our shores in autumn, and at the same season migrants reach us to remain as winter residents. Gardens and orchards are the favourite haunts of this sprightly little finch in summer, and it is often very numerous in villages and on the outskirts of country towns. The nest is generally built near habitations. During the winter months to a very large extent the Goldfinch forsakes cultivated land, being always most numerous at this season on tracts of waste ground, or along alder-fringed streams and canals. The sprightly and engaging actions of this bird resemble those of the Lesser Redpoll and Siskin, with both of which it frequently associates in winter.



Photo: W. Farren

**Goldfinch**

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Food.**—Seeds and insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In fruit trees, oaks, sycamores, chestnuts, and other trees. Sometimes in evergreens or hedgerows. Often at a considerable height, and frequently near the end of a long slender bough. *Materials* Moss, roots, dry grass, lichen and wool, lined with hair, feathers, wool and vegetable down.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Greyish or greenish white, spotted and streaked with deep red-brown and grey. *Size.* About .66 x .51 inches. *Time.* May to July, or even August.

**Notes.**—Song. A very sweet twittering warble. *Call.* Ziflit or Sticklit.

### SISKIN

*Carduelis spinus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, chin and lores black. Above and behind the eye is a yellowish streak. Upper parts olive-green, streaked with black, with the exception of the rump, which is yellow, without streaks. Wings olive-green, crossed by two yellowish bars, the primaries margined with yellow. Tail black, yellowish on the upper half. Throat and breast greenish yellow, rest of under parts greyish white, streaked with black. Bill pale brown; irides and legs brown. Length, about 5 inches. *Female.* Lacks the black on the head and chin. Upper parts olive-brown, under parts paler than in male, and streaked all over with dusky black, except in centre of belly. *Young.* Browner than female, and streaks more pronounced.

**Distribution.**—Resident, also winter visitor. Nests from Perthshire northwards to Caithness, in parts of Ross and Sutherland, and in small numbers in Solway area. A few pairs breed regularly in Cumberland, and it has occasionally been recorded as nesting elsewhere in England. In Ireland it breeds locally. Much more generally distributed in winter, and is then by no means uncommon in the south of England.

## TWITE

**Habits.**—The summer home of the Siskin is amongst pine forests, but in winter it is very partial to alder-fringed streams or ponds, associating with Redpolls, Goldfinches and Titmice. Migrants arrive in September or October, departing in April or May, but as a winter visitor its numbers are subject to considerable variation from year to year. The aerobatic actions of the Siskin are suggestive of those of the Titmice, and when disturbed or voluntarily seeking a fresh feeding place, the whole flock rises suddenly as if governed by a common impulse.

**Food.**—Seeds, buds, and sometimes aphides.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally in coniferous trees, from ten to fifty feet from the ground. *Materials.* Slender twigs, dry grass, moss and lichen, lined with hair, vegetable down, fur, wool, and sometimes a few feathers.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Closely resemble those of the Goldfinch.

**Size.** About .66 × .52 inches. **Time.** April, May, June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Low, but sweet and varied, concluding with six coupled notes and a final harsh *chair*. *Other notes* A subdued twittering and a distinctive metallic *tysing*.

## TWITE

*Carduelis flavirostris*

**Description.**—*Male.* General coloration light reddish-brown, with darker centres to the feathers, giving a streaked effect. Primaries and tail-quills very dark brown, more or less edged with white on the outer webs. There is a whitish bar across the wing. Rump purplish red; belly and under tail-coverts nearly white. Bill pale yellow; irides and legs brown. Length, about 5½ inches. *Female.* Lacks the red on the rump, and is lighter on the upper parts. *Young.* Resemble the female, but are duller and more greyish. The absence of red on the head and breast distinguishes the Twite from the Linnet and the Redpoll,

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

while the yellow bill provides another means of identification.

**Distribution.**—Resident. In Scotland common and generally distributed in most parts, including the Hebrides,

Orkneys and Shetlands, but is scarce as a breeding bird in the south-west, and on lower parts of the east side. Widely dispersed in Ireland, and breeds in most counties. In England nests very locally on the higher moors of the northern, and some of those of the midland counties. Has nested in North Devon and Merioneth. To the south of England usually an uncertain winter visitor, although occasionally numerous on parts of the south coast.



Twite

**Habits.**—The Twite, or Mountain Linnet, is chiefly a bird of the higher moorlands during the summer months, but is also found on islands and even quite small rock-stacks, where there is a sufficiency of tall heather for concealment of the nest. In winter the birds betake themselves to lower ground, but their movements are mostly of a local character, any extensive southward migration being rarely noticed. In localities where the species is abundant, several nests may frequently be found within a very small area. Two broods are frequently reared during a season.

**Food.**—Seeds, and occasionally grain.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Amongst tall heather or gorse, in creepers or bushes, under sods, in large holes in stone walls, under rocks or on banks of streams, and on ledges of sea-

### **LESSER REDPOLL**

cliffs. Frequently on the ground. *Materials.* Small twigs, roots, grass stalks and blades, moss. The lining is of hair, wool, feathers and fur.

**Eggs.**—4 to 7. Very similar to those of the Linnet. *Size.* About .69 × .5 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Very like the Linnet's, although not equal to it in strength or sweetness. *Call.* A rather shrill *twite*. Also utters a canary-like *tweek*.

### **MEALY REDPOLL**

*Carduelis linaria linaria*

This bird has been separated by many writers from the following species, but as there are intermediate forms, it has been the subject of much controversy. It occurs in Britain as a winter visitor from Northern Europe in varying numbers, chiefly along the east coast. Sometimes extremely numerous. The Mealy Redpoll is slightly larger than our resident bird and more greyish.

### **LESSER REDPOLL**

*Carduelis linaria cabaret*

**Description.**—*Male.* Ruddy brown above, streaked with blackish, the brown wings crossed by two buff bars; rump washed with rosy red. Crown bright crimson; lores and chin black; breast rosy red; flanks golden brown, streaked with blackish. Belly buffish white. Bill horn-colour; legs dark brown; irides hazel. Length, about 4½ inches. *Female.* Lacks the red on the breast and rump, there is less black on the chin, and more streaks on the under parts. *Young.* Resemble the female, but there is no red on the crown. This species may always be distinguished from the Twite and Linnet by the black on the chin.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Distribution.**—Resident. Most numerous and generally distributed in Scotland and the north of England, much more local in the south and in Wales. In the extreme southwestern counties of England it is rare even in autumn and winter, when more general elsewhere. Resident and widely distributed in Ireland.

**Habits.**—During the summer months the Lesser Redpoll



*Photo : Howard Bentham*

### Lesser Redpoll

and Goldfinches. This little finch is a remarkably fearless and very active bird, and whilst engaged in extracting the seeds from the birch or alder, it assumes all manner of curious tit-like attitudes, frequently hanging head downwards as it pecks vigorously at a bunch of seed-heads.

**Food.**—Various kinds of seeds, also insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually at no great height from the ground, in birch, larch, alder, pear or other trees ; also in hawthorns, bramble, honeysuckle, gorse. *Materials.* Fine twigs, dry grass, roots, moss, wool. Neatly lined with willow-down, and sometimes hair or feathers.

## LINNET

**Eggs.**—4 or 5, rarely 6. Pale bluish green, marked generally more thickly round the broader end with purplish or reddish brown, and pale greyish brown. **Size.** About 62 x .46 inches. **Time.** May to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A short twittering, usually uttered on the wing. *Call.* Peewit, or kreck, kreck, nayid.

## LINNET

*Carduelis cannabina*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head is a greyish brown, with dark striations. Back a rich chestnut-brown. Chin and throat are buffish white, streaked with brown; forehead, crown and breast crimson. Flanks brown, with dark centres to the feathers; belly buffish white. Wing-coverts ruddy brown, flight feathers blackish, with a conspicuous greyish white patch. Tail black, edged with white. Bill lead-colour; legs brown; irides hazel. Length, about 5½ inches. *Female.* Browner and lacks the crimson colouring; the white parts are less distinct. Breast buff, streaked with dark brown. *Young.* Resemble female, but are more reddish.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Common and widely distributed throughout the British Isles, except in the west of Scotland, where it is local or rare, and in the Shetlands, where it rarely occurs. Nests commonly in the Orkneys.



Linnet

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Habits.**—In the summer months the Linnet chiefly occurs on gorse-clad commons, in thickets of hawthorn and bramble, along hedgerows, on coastal marshes, and among sandhills clothed in long marram-grass. It is always most partial to uncultivated ground. During autumn immigrant flocks reach our shores, and at this season numbers of our breeding birds appear to leave or move southward within our area. Passage-migrants occur in May, long after the nesting Linnets have settled in their summer haunts. Throughout the autumn and winter this bird congregates in flocks, sometimes of considerable size, which resort to stubble ground, vegetable fields, weedy portions of commons, rough pasture lands, or rick-yards.

**Food.**—Seeds of various weeds. The young are fed upon insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Frequently in gorse bushes, but also in maythorn, juniper and other bushes, or even amongst long thick heather, or in marram-grass. Generally at no great height from the ground, but not very exceptionally right upon it. *Materials.* A few small twigs, dry grass stems, fibrous roots, moss or wool, lined with hair and feathers, sometimes with rabbit or vegetable down.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Very like those of the Goldfinch, Twite, and smaller types of Greenfinches' eggs, so that careful identification is essential. *Size.* About .72 x .52 inches. *Time.* April to July, or even August.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A low twittering, being a mixture of sweet and rather harsh notes. The latter have been compared to the twang of a stringed instrument. *Other notes.* *Twit, twit, or tway-ee.*

## BULLFINCH

*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and chin glossy black. Nape and back blue-grey; rump white; tail black. Cheeks and under parts brick-red; under tail-coverts white. Wing-quills dusky, across which is a whitish bar; greater wing-coverts black. Bill black; legs flesh-colour; irides brown. Length, about 6 inches.

*Female.* Black parts not so intense. Nape and back greyish brown; under parts dull red-brown. *Young.* Differ from the adult female in having no black on the head, which is greyish brown. Under-parts pale brown.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Generally distributed, although somewhat local in Scotland. Occurs in some of the Inner, but has rarely been recorded from the Outer Hebrides. Birds observed in the Orkneys and Shetlands may belong to the northern form, a larger and more brightly coloured bird, which visits us not infrequently in autumn and winter.

**Habits.**—During the summer months the Bullfinch resorts to the outskirts of woods, tall tangled hedgerows, thickets, wooded commons, large gardens, shrubberies, and uncultivated land scattered with tall thick bushes. In winter the bird is nomadic, and is then much more frequently seen in fairly open country, small parties and occasionally fairly large flocks visiting our lanes, gardens and orchards, where the soft piping note and conspicuous white rump



Bullfinch (Female)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

often attract attention. Although largely a seed-eater, the Bullfinch is a destructive bird amongst fruit trees, its attacks upon the buds causing considerable damage. It has been asserted that only those containing a grub are destroyed, but be this as it may, trees are sometimes almost entirely stripped. Unlike many other members of the family, this bird rarely associates with other finches in winter.

**Food.**—Seeds, fruit buds, and occasionally insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In thick quick-set hedges, evergreens, on the lower branches of small trees, and very frequently amongst the tangled branches of the wild rose. Occasionally in gorse bushes. Usually from five to eight feet from the ground. *Materials.* Outer rim of fine twigs and fibrous roots, with sometimes a little moss. Lined neatly with fine roots and a little hair. Generally rather shallow.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Clear greenish blue, spotted, speckled, and sometimes blotched or streaked with purplish brown, the underlying markings of a paler tint. Markings often assume the form of a belt round the larger end. *Size.* About .77 × .57 inches. *Time.* April to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A short subdued piping. *Call.* A soft wheon.

## COMMON CROSSBILL

*Loxia curvirostra*

**Description.**—*Male.* Prevailing colour of fully adult bird crimson, with a shade of orange. Bill, legs and irides brown. The mandibles are crossed near the tips. Length, about 6 inches. The coloration varies greatly according to age, the full red not being attained until the third or fourth year. *Female.* Yellowish green, more or less streaked. *Young.* In their first plumage, smoky brown above, the under parts greyish white, with dark striations. The mandibles do not commence to cross until about the time the

## *COMMON CROSSBILL*

nest is vacated. After the autumn moult the young males are tinged with orange, and young females with yellow, but the stripes are retained.

**Distribution.**—There are two races of Crossbill occurring in the British Isles. The Scottish Crossbill is resident, and breeds in the north of Scotland, having occurred irregularly in winter in very small numbers in Dumfries, Kirkcudbright and Fife. This form has a stouter bill and longer wing than the Common Crossbill. The latter occurs regularly in some districts, and reaches us occasionally in enormous numbers, usually appearing from mid-June to August, many remaining to breed, but gradually diminishing in numbers. The last great invasion was in 1909. The Common Crossbill now breeds regularly in all four provinces of Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Crossbill, under normal conditions, is chiefly confined to pine forests, but when great numbers arrive from the Continent, it becomes more generally distributed, and may then be seen almost wherever there are fir, larch, or spruce trees, although naturally more abundant in large woods of conifers. The seeds of coniferous trees are undoubtedly the bird's favourite food, and a litter of dissected cones under the trees often denotes the presence of roaming flocks, although it should be borne in mind that the ground is often thickly strewn with the remains of cones where squirrels have been feeding. The 'call-note' is usually uttered as the birds take wing after feeding.

**Food.**—Seeds of fir or larch, insects, fruit and buds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In Scots pines and other conifers, sometimes close to the bole, but often on a horizontal branch at some distance from the trunk. *Materials.* A platform of twigs to which is added dry grass, roots, wool, or moss, the lining consisting of fine dry grass and hair.

**Eggs.**—3 to 5, usually 4. Greyish white, spotted sparingly with reddish or purplish brown. *Size.* About .9 x .67

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

inches. *Time.* February to April, or much later. Very similar to eggs of the Greenfinch.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A soft twittering warble. *Call.* A loud *chip, chip, chip*; sometimes *soc, soc, soc*.

### CHAFFINCH

*Fringilla cælebs*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, nape, and sides of neck slate-blue. Back reddish brown, rump and upper tail-coverts greenish. Cheeks and under parts pinkish chestnut, deepest on the breast. The primaries are brown,

with light edges. Lesser wing-coverts white; greater, black tipped with white, thus forming two white wing-bars. Tail black, the two outer feathers marked with white. Bill greyish blue in summer, pinkish horn in winter. Legs and irides brown. Length, about 6 inches. *Female.* Head, neck and upper part of back greyish brown; rump and upper tail-coverts dull greenish. Under parts brownish white, tinged with pink on the breast. White wing-bars less pronounced. *Young.* Resemble the female, but are paler.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Generally distributed and numerous. Nests in the Orkneys but not in the Shetlands, and although visiting the Outer Hebrides, apparently does not breed.



Chaffinch (Male)

## CHAFFINCH

**Habits.**—The Chaffinch is a common and familiar bird both in populated areas and in open country, being even more widely dispersed in the breeding season than the House-Sparrow, inasmuch as it commonly nests far from habitations as well as in their vicinity.

In winter, flocks of our resident birds are subject to local movements, and are swelled by arrivals from overseas. The return migration of the winter visitors begins in March and continues until the end of April. The Chaffinch is often the companion of the Brambling, especially in beech woods, but in more open country it associates with mixed flocks of various finches and buntings. Even in severe weather the song is often heard in February, continuing until July. On bright or mild days in autumn, imperfect outbursts of song are by no means exceptional.

**Food.**—Seeds, buds, berries, beech-mast and insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In the fork of a small tree, in white-thorns, gorse and other bushes, amongst small twigs growing from the trunk of a large tree, and in hedgerows. It may be found almost anywhere wherever there are trees or shrubs.

*Materials.* Neatly built of moss, wool and grasses, lined with hair, feathers and down. Often externally decorated with lichens.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Pale greenish or stone-colour, sometimes pale blue, spotted and streaked with dark reddish brown. Some eggs are suffused with purplish buff. Occasionally pale blue, without markings. *Size.* About .75 × .58 inches.

*Time.* April to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A joyous ringing trill. *Other notes.* Spink-spink or treef-treef. *Call* during flight, chip, chip.

## BRAMBLING

*Fringilla montifringilla*

**Description.**—*Male.* In summer the head, neck and mantle are bluish black. Lower back and rump white, very conspicuous in flight. Wings black, crossed by two white bars, the primaries edged with white. Chin, belly and under tail-coverts white. Throat and breast chestnut, a patch of the same colour on the lesser wing-coverts. Flanks streaked with black. Tail blackish, the feathers margined with brown. Bill black; legs brown; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches.

The breeding plumage is sometimes almost fully assumed before the birds leave in spring. *Female.* Duller and browner, lacking the distinctive black and chestnut. White on rump less pure. In winter the bright colours are more or less obscured by



Brambling (Female)

sandy margins to the feathers, and the bill is yellow, tipped with black.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Generally distributed in England and Wales, except in extreme south-west of England, where it does not occur. In Scotland most frequent and numerous in the south, scarcer and more irregular elsewhere, although sometimes occurring in large numbers in the north-east. In Ireland rarest on the west side. A nest containing eggs was found in Sutherland in 1920.

**Habits.**—The Brambling sometimes arrives in small parties towards the end of September, but the greatest influx takes place in October. The numbers which visit

## HOUSE-SPARROW

us vary a good deal from year to year, and although severe weather will sometimes account for large flocks, the bird is often extremely numerous during very mild winters. The abundance or scarcity of beech-mast, upon which this species chiefly feeds in winter, no doubt has a considerable influence upon its numbers. The return migration is performed in March or April, although a few birds exceptionally remain with us until May or even June. The Brambling is most usually met with where beech trees are numerous, but when the crop of beech-mast is small, many birds resort to the stubbles, where they no doubt subsist upon seeds of various weeds. Fir woods are sometimes frequented in spring. In the beech woods this bird usually fraternizes with the Chaffinch, but in open country or fir woods it joins mixed flocks of finches.

**Food.**—Beech-mast, seeds and insects.

**Notes.**—A harsh *zsheep* or a low *tup, tup*. In spring it utters a call very like that of the Greenfinch.

## HOUSE-SPARROW

*Passer domesticus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, nape and lower back slate grey, sides of nape and crown chocolate-brown. Mantle and wing-coverts reddish brown, mixed with black. Wing-coverts tipped with white, forming a wing-bar. Primaries blackish grey, edged with chestnut; tail feathers dusky brown with light edgings. Cheeks and sides of neck whitish. Chin, throat and fore-breast black, remainder of under parts greyish, brownish on the flanks. Bill blackish; legs brown; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches. *Female.* Lacks the black on the chin and throat, and the grey on the head and nape. The wing-bar is less distinct, and the under parts browner. *Young.* Deeper brown than female, which they otherwise resemble, except that the bill is dull yellow.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Distribution.**—Resident. Generally distributed except in Outer Hebrides, where it is local, and this also applies to many parts of Ireland.

**Habits.**—This bird is common in town and country alike, and wherever there are dwellings it is almost sure to be much in evidence. The nest is rarely found far from habitations. There is little indication of any migratory movement, although some exposed localities are forsaken in winter, and flocks have occurred at rock-stations and lightships, which may point to a limited migration at times. The House-Sparrow often rears three or more broods in a season, and being a hardy and adaptable species, its abundance is by no means remarkable. At the close of the breeding season



House-Sparrow (Female).

many family parties gather in immense flocks in the corn-fields, where they undoubtedly consume considerable quantities of grain. The bird is sociable at all seasons of the year, and wherever sufficient accommodation is available, often nests in large colonies.

**Food.**—Seeds, buds, insects and their larvæ, and grain.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In any convenient hole or recess in a building, in holes in cliffs, sand-pits, thatch or stacks, amongst ivy on trees or buildings, in thick bushes or hedgerows, amongst branches of trees, and in various other situations.

**Materials.** Straws, dry grass, string, rags and various odds and ends, warmly lined with feathers. An untidy structure, domed when in the open, partially so when under cover.

**Eggs.**—4 to 7. Greyish white, generally mottled and

## TREE-SPARROW

spotted thickly with varying shades of brown and grey. Sometimes the markings tend to form a cap at the larger end. Very variable. *Size.* About '9 × '6 inches. *Time.* April to August.

**Notes.**—*Chirrip* or *cheap*. Sometimes a hurried scolding.

## TREE-SPARROW

*Passer montanus*

**Description.**—Crown and nape dull chestnut, cheeks white, marked by a triangular black patch. Upper part of back bright rusty brown, streaked with black, lower portion and upper tail-coverts greyish. Lesser wing-coverts reddish brown, greater wing-coverts black, quills dull black, edged with rusty brown. There are two white bars crossing the wing. Chin and throat black, sides of neck white. Breast bright ash-grey, belly dull white, flanks and under tail-coverts buffish brown. Tail greyish brown, edged with a lighter shade. Bill lead colour; legs pale brown; irides hazel. Length, about 5½ inches. *Sexes alike*, which serves to distinguish this species from the House-Sparrow. The chestnut crown and nape, and the black patch on the cheek are also marks of distinction. *Young.* Resemble adults, but the wing-bars are buffish, and the black on the cheeks and throat is duller and less extensive.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Local, but



Tree-Sparrow

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

widely distributed in England, except in the extreme southwest and the Lake District, where it is rare. Uncommon in Wales, being almost unknown in the south and west. In Scotland it occurs chiefly on the east side, although breeding quite numerously in some of the Outer Hebrides. Very local in Ireland, but well established in County Dublin.

**Habits.**—The Tree-Sparrow is much shyer than its relative the House-Sparrow, and its haunts are of a more rural nature. During the nesting season this bird is most frequently to be found in groves of old willows or other trees containing many hollows, about deserted quarries, cliffs, barns or ruined buildings. Large numbers arrive on our east coast in autumn, and many of the flocks observed in winter are probably of continental origin. Tree-Sparrows associate with other finches and Yellow Buntings in the winter months.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, seeds, buds, fruit and berries.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a hollow in a tree, pollard willows being frequently chosen. Holes in walls or buildings are also used. Sometimes placed amongst thatch, in crevices in cliffs, and occasionally in holes in sand-pits. *Materials.* Straw, dry grass, roots, lined with hair and feathers.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6, rarely as many as 8. Very similar to those of the preceding species, but generally smaller, browner and more heavily marked. *Size.* About .8 x .57 inches. *Time.* April or May to July.

**Notes.**—A shrill *chib* or *chip*. Sometimes a series of chirps, forming an attempt at a song.

## CORN-BUNTING

*Emberiza calandra*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts light brown, inclining to olive, streaked with dusky brown. Wings and tail darker brown, edged with a lighter shade. Under parts buffish white, streaked on the throat, fore-breast and flanks with dark brown. Bill brown above and yellow below; legs pale brown; irides hazel. Length, about 7 inches. *Sexes alike.* Easily distinguished from other buntings by large size and subdued coloration. *Young.* More yellowish than adults, and the streaks on the upper parts are darker and more numerous.

**Distribution.**—Resident, and also a winter visitor to a limited extent. Common in many coastal regions throughout the British Isles, but much more local inland, although numerous in some districts. Appears to be to a certain extent sporadic in some inland counties.

**Habits.**—The Corn or Common Bunting is found chiefly in open cultivated country, and is most frequently met with in the vicinity of corn, clover, pea, and mowing grass fields. It also frequents commons and downs. A bird of sluggish habits, this Bunting will utter its monotonous jingling song hour after hour while perched on a telegraph wire or post, or some other prominent object, but where these are not available it will utilize a tall weed, small bush, or thick tuft of grass. The flight is slow, and when disturbed the bird usually



Nest of Corn-Bunting

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

flies for a short distance with the legs dangling down. In winter Corn-Buntings flock, and many breeding places are forsaken at this season. Immigrants arrive on the east coast in some numbers in autumn, departing in spring.

**Food.**—Grain, grass seed and insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually on the ground, among growing crops, at other times low down in gorse or other bushes, or among long grass on a bank. When in bushes, occasionally at some height from the ground. *Materials.* Roots, grass stems, coarse grass blades and sometimes straw, lined with fibrous roots, fine grass and hair.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Dull purplish white to pale buff, blotched, scrawled and spotted with dark purplish brown. The underlying markings are violet-grey. Generally may be recognized by their large size and bold markings. *Size.* About .96 x .71 inches. *Time.* May to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A series of jingling notes, suggesting the sound produced by allowing the links of a large chain to fall gradually to the ground. *Call.* Chuck or chit.

## YELLOW BUNTING

*Emberiza citrinella*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, throat, nape and under parts canary-yellow, varying in depth. Crown streaked with blackish brown, the flanks with reddish brown, and there are sometimes a few reddish spots on the breast. Back bright reddish brown, streaked with dark brown, rump chestnut. Wing-quills dusky brown, edged with greenish yellow; tail dusky black, the two outer feathers marked with white. Bill bluish horn, tinged with brown. Legs yellowish brown; irides dark brown. Length, about 6½ inches. *Female.* Much duller, showing less yellow and more streaked on the head and upper parts. *Young.* \*Resemble the adult female.

## YELLOW BUNTING

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Generally distributed and numerous except in the Shetlands, where it apparently only occurs on migration. Does not breed in some of the Outer Hebrides.

**Habits.**—Our breeding Yellow Buntings or Yellow Hammers appear to be stationary except for local movements of winter flocks, but immigrants reach us in autumn from overseas, and return in spring. A bird of the open country, this species is always most numerous on commons and other tracts of waste land, and about hedgerows and thickets. In winter it frequently resorts to stubble fields, rick-yards and farmsteads, often in the company of various kinds of finches. Should

the weather be severe, Yellow Buntings occasionally visit gardens surrounded by open country, although not often venturing very close to dwellings. The song is not frequently heard as early as mid-February, continuing until about the close of August. Unlike the more retiring Cirl Bunting, this bird usually delivers its notes while perched in full view on the top of a gorse bush, hedgerow or telegraph wire.

**Food.**—Seeds of weeds and grain are consumed in winter. In summer this bird subsists largely on insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On hedgebanks, amongst brambles, coarse grass or other vegetation growing at the foot of a small bush, in gorse, thorn, or other bushes. Generally near



♀. Yellow Bunting (Female)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

the ground, sometimes actually upon it. *Materials.* Dry grasses, roots and moss, lined with fine grass or horsehair.

**Eggs.**—3 to 5. Usually 4. Pale purplish white, streaked, veined and spotted with purplish brown and violet-grey. *Size.* About .88 x .65 inches. *Time.* April to August.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Te, te, te, te, te twyee. *Call.* A loud chit or a harsh chire-r-r.

### CIRL BUNTING

*Emberiza cirlus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and nape olive-green, streaked with black. A pronounced black line passes through the eye.



Cirl Bunting (Female)

Sides of face pale yellow; chin and upper part of throat black. Below the throat is yellow, followed by an olive-green band. Rest of under parts lemon yellow, shading to rufous on the streaked flanks. Mantle chestnut, streaked with black; rump and wing-coverts olive. Primaries dusky black, with lighter margins. Tail brown, edged with white. Bill bluish grey; legs brownish yellow; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches. *Female.* More streaked in appearance. Throat pale yellow, streaked

with black; back and crown olive-brown, with black striations. Flanks only tinged with rufous. Distinguished from female Yellow Bunting by the olive rump and less yellow breast. *Young.* Resemble female, but are browner.

## CIRL BUNTING

**Distribution.**—Resident. Very local. Nests in coastal counties from Kent to Cornwall, and in Somerset. Also breeds in several other southern counties, both north and south of the Thames, in many counties of Wales, as well as in Hereford, Shropshire, Worcester and South Warwick. Nests occasionally in Yorkshire, north of which, as in Scotland and Ireland, it is only a straggler.

**Habits.**—The Cirl Bunting is more arboreal than the Yellow Hammer, although not partial to thickly wooded country. The male often sings while concealed amongst the branches of a tall tree, and appears to be shyer of observation than its commoner relative referred to previously. In winter Cirl Buntings sometimes resort to more open country, and at this season in coastal counties will even frequent almost treeless tracts near the sea. Although subject to local wandering in winter, many birds undoubtedly remain in or near their breeding areas throughout the year. The song commences as early as the middle of February, and autumnal singing appears to be more frequent than in the case of the Yellow Bunting, sometimes continuing until the end of October, and occasionally it may be heard almost throughout November.

**Food.**—Seeds and insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a bush or hedge, or on a bank, often amongst the roots of a tree. Sometimes near or upon the ground, at other times several feet above it. On commons, on cultivated land, or in copses containing tall trees.

**Materials.**—Very similar to those employed by the Yellow Bunting.

**Eggs.**—3 to 5. Very like those of the preceding species, but usually paler in ground-colour, which is more inclined to a bluish or greenish white. The streaks are generally bolder and darker. *Size.* About .86 x .65 inches. *Time.* May to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A clear metallic trill. Often described

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

as resembling the Yellow Hammer's, but lacking the final note. It is, however, much more rapidly uttered, and quite distinctive. *Call.* *Tsip.*

### ORTOLAN BUNTING

*Emberiza hortulana*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck and upper breast greyish olive. Chin and throat pale yellow. There is a pronounced moustachial streak of the same colour. Remainder of under parts pale reddish brown. Back wing-coverts and secondaries similarly coloured, but streaked with black. Primaries and tail brown, the latter edged with white. Bill reddish; legs and irides brown. Length, about 6½ inches. *Female.* Duller and browner, the greener head being streaked with brown.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant. Occurs regularly at Fair Isle (Shetlands) in spring and autumn. Also of fairly frequent appearance on the east and south coasts of England, chiefly in autumn. Has been reported from various other parts. Sometimes occurs in small flocks.

### LITTLE BUNTING

*Emberiza pusilla*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown and cheeks chestnut, the former bounded by a black line which meets a whitish collar. Back brown, streaked with black; wings and tail brown. Throat chestnut; under parts whitish, shading to buff, on the flanks, which are streaked with blackish. Bill, legs and irides brown. Length, about 5 inches. *Female.* Paler, with less defined head markings.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant. Occurs at Fair Isle almost regularly in autumn, but in small numbers. Has occasionally been seen in the same locality in spring. The bird has been observed in other parts of Scotland, several times in England, and once in Ireland.

## REED-BUNTING

*Emberiza schœniclus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts rich brownish black, the feathers broadly margined with reddish brown and grey. Rump and upper tail-coverts black, tinged with grey. Tail blackish, broadly edged with white. Head black, bounded by a white collar; the chin and throat black. Centre of breast black, remainder dull white, streaked with black on the flanks. Bill brownish black; legs brown; irides hazel. Length, about six inches. *Female.* Smaller, and the head brown and the collar dusky brown. Chin, throat and breast dull white, the latter more streaked than in the male. *Young.* Closely resemble the female.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Generally distributed in all suitable localities throughout the British Isles, except in the Shetlands, where it is a rare visitor. Nests sparingly in both the Orkneys and Outer Hebrides.

**Habits.**—The Reed-Bunting in summer frequents marshes, the banks of rivers and streams, rush-grown margins of lakes and ponds, boggy commons, or almost any marshy situation. In winter, although a considerable number of birds are still to be seen in the above described localities, others resort to stubble fields and rick-yards. At this season the Reed-Bunting associates with Yellow Buntings and finches, but is also to be observed in small and occasionally large parties.



Reed-Bunting (Female)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

consisting entirely of members of its own species. In autumn migrants from Northern Europe arrive, and many of our nesting birds apparently leave our shores about the same time. The absence of the breeding birds in winter is especially noticeable in the north of England.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, small mollusca, and in winter largely seeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On or near the ground, amongst rushes, long grass, sedges, heather, or in gorse, bramble and thorn bushes overgrown with grass or rushes. *Materials.* Dry grass, rush stems or moss, lined with fine dry grass and horsehair.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Smaller than those of the other buntings nesting in the British Isles. Purplish grey, pale olive, pale greenish, or buff in ground-colour, spotted and scrawled with dark purple-brown, or almost black. Underlying markings violet-grey. Scrawls usually shorter and thicker than those on Yellow Buntings' eggs. *Size.* About .77 × .57 inches. *Time.* April to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A series of notes sounding something like *cheo, cheo, chee, chee, zshwee.* *Other notes.* *Tschee, sceep* or *chit.*

### LAPLAND BUNTING

*Calcarius lapponicus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, sides of head, throat and fore-neck black. A whitish stripe passes over the eye and down the sides of the neck. Nape bright chestnut; back blackish, streaked with rust-colour. Wings and tail deep brown, with paler edges to the feathers. Under parts white, tinged with chestnut and streaked with black. Bill yellow; legs blackish; irides hazel. Length, about 6½ inches. In winter the black of the head is obscured by sandy margins to the feathers, and the eye-stripe, and white of neck and nape are similarly marked. *Female.* Head, throat and neck

## *SNOW BUNTING*

dusky brown, and the rest of the plumage duller than in the male. In winter the brown of the head and neck is obscured by sandy fringes, and the remainder of the plumage is duller.

**Distribution.**—Autumn passage-migrant, but occasionally observed in spring and summer. Occurs fairly regularly on the east coast of Great Britain and in the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland, but in very variable numbers. Elsewhere a vagrant.

## *SNOW BUNTING*

*Plectrophenax nivalis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Pure white, with the exception of the mantle, centre of tail, terminal half of primaries, scapulars and inner secondaries, which are black. Bill and legs black; irides hazel. Length, about 6½ inches. In winter tawny brown fringes almost conceal the black feathers, and the white areas of the upper parts are obscured by rust-red, darkest on the crown and ear-coverts. Bill yellow, with a dark tip. *Female.* Greyish brown where the male is black, the head and neck mottled with blackish. *Young.* Browner and more spotted in appearance than the female, which they otherwise resemble.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Breeds in limited numbers on the higher mountains in the northern half of Scotland, as far south as Perthshire, and in the Shetlands, and is a winter visitor to the coasts and inland, and also to the Northern Isles. A winter visitor only to England, Wales and Ireland, chiefly to the coasts, but also occurs on the hills of Wales and the north of England.

**Habits.**—Early in September, Snow Buntings commence to arrive on our coasts, larger numbers appearing in October and November. The flocks which visit us in winter are subject to considerable variation, and are no doubt influenced by the severity of the weather in the northern localities

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

from whence the birds arrive. The return movement takes place in March, although sometimes it is extended to April. In winter this Bunting is usually found in flocks, sometimes

of considerable size, and it not infrequently associates with Skylarks and finches which haunt the coasts or treeless inland districts.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects, also seeds and grain.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In crevices of rocks or under loose stones on mountain-sides, usually deeply hidden and difficult to discover.

**Materials.** Dry grass,

stalks, moss and roots, lined with fine grass, hair and feathers.

**Eggs.**—5 or 6. White or pale bluish or greenish white, blotched, spotted and streaked with deep brownish red, the underlying markings being violet-grey or yellowish brown.

**Size.** About .86 × .64 inches. **Time.** May to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Short and rather mellow, often uttered on the wing, also from a heap of rocks. *Call.* A loud *tweet*. Also utters a twittering note.

### WOODLARK

*Lullula arborea*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown light brown, streaked with darker brown, the feathers sometimes being raised to form a crest. There is a buff streak over the eye and ear-coverts, and the latter are rufous in colour. Upper parts pale reddish



Snow Bunting (Female)

## WOODLARK

brown, streaked on the neck and back with dark brown. Tail brown, outer pair of feathers blackish brown. Wing-quills dusky, edged with brown; primary-coverts tipped with white. Under parts buffish white, the throat, breast and flanks streaked with blackish brown. Bill dusky brown; legs pinkish brown; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished from the Skylark by the much shorter tail, white-tipped primary-coverts, and more distinct eye-stripe. *Young.* Streaked with buff and black on the upper parts, which are more rufous than in the adult. Under parts more streaked.



Woodlark

**Distribution.**—Resident; also a rare passage-migrant and winter visitor. Local. Breeds most abundantly in the southern counties of England, especially in Devon. It has undoubtedly increased in Surrey and Sussex during the last decade. Nests not uncommonly in some parts of East Anglia. Also breeds in the southern Midlands, and in South Wales, Montgomery and Shropshire. Rarely breeds in the north of England. To Fair Isle it is a regular autumn and winter visitor, but only a wanderer to other parts of Scotland. In Ireland apparently only nests in Wicklow.

**Habits.**—The Woodlark is much more arboreal in its habits than the Skylark, being found on the edges of woods adjoining heaths and commons, in copses and plantations, on hill-sides scattered with trees, especially oaks or birches, in parks and in fields where there are trees. In winter this bird is migratory to a limited extent, appearing in small

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

parties in localities at some distance from its nesting areas, and in some districts visiting almost treeless country close to the sea. Although the Woodlark spends much time upon the ground, it frequently seeks the shelter of a tree on being disturbed. The flight is slow and undulatory.

**Food.**—Mainly insects. Seeds are also eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground, generally well concealed by a tuft of grass, or amongst heather or bracken. Sometimes on a bank. *Materials.* Coarse grass, moss and sometimes lichen, lined with fine grass and hair.

**Eggs.**—4 or 5. Dirty white in ground-colour, thickly speckled and spotted with dull reddish brown. Underlying markings grey. *Size.* About .84 x .65 inches. *Time.* March to June. Distinguished from those of the Skylark by redder markings and lighter and less obscured ground.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Less varied than the Skylark's, and not so loud, but very sweet in tone. Sings on the wing or while perched on trees, and sometimes when on the ground. *Call.* *Tweedle* or *too-tweedle*.

## SKYLARK

*Alauda arvensis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown dark brown, the feathers edged with a lighter shade, and somewhat elongated so as to form a crest which may be erected or depressed at will. Rest of upper parts reddish brown, with pale margins to the feathers; wings and tail dusky. Under parts buffish white, the breast spotted with dark brown. The pale buff eye-stripe is less distinct than in the Woodlark. Bill dark brown; legs reddish brown; irides hazel. Length, about 7½ inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* More spotted above, and the streaks on the breast are more pronounced.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Common and generally distributed.

## SKYLARK

**Habits.**—A bird of the open country, the Skylark is numerous on both cultivated and waste land. Commons, marshes, coastal areas, corn and hay-fields, downlands and rough pastures are amongst its favourite haunts. Many of our breeding Skylarks remain with us throughout the year, others are summer visitors, migrating in autumn, to return in spring. Along our eastern and northern coasts enormous numbers of immigrants arrive in the autumn, many of these remaining throughout the winter, others passing beyond our shores to Southern Europe. In winter this bird collects in flocks on stubble land and fields of sprouting corn or clover. The Skylark sings almost throughout the year. The notes commence as the bird rises, and continue while it ascends to a considerable altitude, ceasing suddenly as the bird drops to earth. The song is sometimes delivered from the top of a small bush, or from a clod of earth, fence post, or rail. Notes of other species are sometimes cleverly reproduced, amongst others those of the Whinchat, Ringed Plover and Meadow-Pipit.

**Food.**—Seeds, worms, insects, grass and corn blades.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a depression in the ground, among grass or growing crops, in heather or rushes, sometimes concealed by a tuft of grass growing amongst shingle. *Materials.* Dry grass, roots and horsehair. Often only the first-named.

**Eggs.**—8 to 5. Greyish or greenish white, thickly mottled



Skylark

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

with olive-brown and grey, often so densely as to conceal the ground-colour. Distinguished from eggs of Woodlark by the crowded markings. *Size.* About .93 x .68 inches. *Time.* April to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Consists of several strains of trilling and warbling notes variously modulated, and interrupted now and again by loud whistling. *Call.* A short liquid trill.

### SHORE-LARK

*Eremophila alpestris*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead, throat and sides of neck pale yellow. There is a broad black band across the breast, and a black patch extends from the base of the bill below the eye. A black band across the crown terminates towards the nape in a double crest. Below the black breast-band the under parts are white, streaked on the flanks with pale brown. Upper parts pale brown, darkest on the tail and wings. Primaries and two outer tail feathers margined, and secondaries tipped with white. Bill and legs black; irides dark brown. Length, about 7 inches. *Female.* Duller, with less black and much shorter crests. In winter the black feathers on the crown and cheeks are partially obscured by yellowish margins.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant and winter visitor. Occurs annually on east coast from the Shetlands to Kent, and occasionally on the south coast of England. Elsewhere very scarce.

**Habits.**—The Shore-Lark arrives on our coasts from early October to mid-November, and is undoubtedly now of far more frequent occurrence than fifty years ago, making due allowance for the increase of observers. Although mainly a bird of the shore, it sometimes wanders some distance inland. It feeds upon insects, seeds, small molluscs and

## TREE-PIPIT

crustaceans. The call has been described as somewhat like that of the Meadow-Pipit.

## TREE-PIPIT

*Anthus trivialis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Closely resembles the Meadow-Pipit next described, but is rather brighter in colour. It may also be distinguished by the shorter and curved hind claw, larger size, stronger bill, and breast markings, which are fewer and larger.

Length, about 6½ inches. *Sexes alike*

**Young.** More buff in appearance, with more distinct streaks on the back.

### Distribution.—

Summer visitor and passage-migrant. Generally distributed and abundant in most parts of England, except in the extreme south-west, where it is rare, as it also is in some parts of

Wales. In Scotland most numerous in the south, rarer in the north. It has only occurred as a rare straggler in Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Tree-Pipit appears in small numbers in the south of England during the first half of April, but the main body arrives from about the middle of that month to mid-May. The autumn emigration is usually over by the end of September. The haunts of this Pipit are always



Tree-Pipit

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

in the vicinity of trees, the moorlands and bare mountainous districts where the Meadow-Pipit is numerous failing to attract it. It is particularly abundant on hill-sides clothed in long grass, or on the edges of heaths and commons dotted with pine and birch trees. Parks, the outskirts of woods, grass fields and railway banks are also frequented. Both in spring and autumn Tree-Pipits may be seen in small flocks, these birds no doubt consisting of newly arrived or travelling migrants.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects. Seeds are occasionally eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Placed in a hollow in the ground in any of the situations above described. Usually well hidden amongst long grass, heather, or dead bracken. *Materials.* Dry grass, moss and roots, lined with finer grass and often horsehair. The Cuckoo's egg is not infrequently deposited in the nest of this Pipit.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Much more variable, and usually more reddish than eggs of the Meadow-Pipit. Bluish, greenish or greyish white, pale pink or brownish, spotted or blotched with reddish, purplish or greyish brown. Markings vary much in size and distribution, and in some types nearly conceal the ground-colour, being thickly powdered over the entire shell. *Size.* About .83 × .63 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A joyous ringing melody, very superior to the more laboured notes of the Meadow-Pipit. Commences with a rapid *see, see, see*, as the bird rises, and concludes with a slower *see-ar, see-ar, see-ar*, during the downward flight. *Other notes.* *Peep* and *skeet*.

## MEADOW-PIPIT

*Anthus pratensis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts pale olive-brown, relieved by dark streaks except on the rump. Wings brownish black, the feathers edged with light brown; tail dark brown, the outer feathers margined with white, and the remainder with light brown. Throat and chin dull white; breast tawny buff, with many dusky streaks. Belly and under tail-coverts dull white, tinged with brown. Bill dark brown; legs light brown; irides hazel. Length, about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Sexes alike. Young.* Duller, and the streaks are less sharply defined.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Common in all suitable localities throughout the British Isles.

**Habits.**—This Pipit is not, as its name suggests, particularly partial to meadows, frequenting moorland country, common lands, marshes, damp meadows, rock-strewn uplands and treeless coastal areas, during the nesting season. In winter many birds leave the higher ground and move southward, or depart overseas, and at this season Meadow-Pipits frequent sewage farms, root-fields or stack-yards, in addition to the above mentioned localities. In autumn large numbers of birds arrive on our coasts from various parts of Europe. Less arboreal in its habits than the Tree-Pipit, this species perches more frequently on rocks, bushes or low walls than on trees. It often takes an upward song-flight like its near relative, and when the nest or young are approached has a habit of hovering near the intruder, with a curious jerky bobbing



Meadow-Pipit

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

action. The Meadow-Pipit, or Tit-Lark, as the bird is sometimes called, is often victimized by the Cuckoo, and not infrequently two Cuckoo's eggs have been found in the same nest. The Meadow-Pipit is usually double brooded.

**Food.**—Mainly insects and their larvæ, although small worms, and in winter seeds and grain are also eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Placed on the ground, amongst heather, rushes or long grass. Sometimes in a hole in a bank or under rocks. *Materials.* Grasses and moss, lined with horsehair and fine dry grass.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Greyish white or very pale bluish green, the ground-colour being almost obscured by small purplish or greyish brown spots. There is sometimes a black hair-line at the larger end. *Size.* About  $8 \times 58$  inches. *Time.* April to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Not so loud or prolonged as the Tree-Pipit's. Commences during the upward flight with a *chipp, chipp, chipp*, terminating with *tsi, tsi, tsi*, repeated many times in rapid succession as the bird descends. *Call.* *Peep, peep, peep*

### ROCK-PIPIP

*Anthus petrosus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts dull brown, with a slight green tinge, streaked with darker brown. Wings dark brown, the edges and tips of quills lighter; tail dark brownish, the outermost feathers smoky white. Throat and breast buffish white, the latter heavily streaked with dark brown, as are also the whitish flanks. Belly and under tail-coverts dull yellowish white, thinly streaked with brown. Bill and irides dark brown; legs reddish brown. Length, about  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Much darker than adults, and the streaks are much broader.

**Distribution.**—Resident and summer visitor. The form

## ROCK-PIPIT

known as the Scandinavian Rock-Pipit visits us in autumn and winter. Our breeding bird is generally distributed along rocky shores throughout the British Isles, and many occur on the flat portions of our coasts in autumn and winter.

**Habits.**—The Rock-Pipit is almost exclusively a maritime species, and is very rarely found far from the sea. In autumn and winter it wanders up estuaries, and frequents sandy shores and mud-flats, returning to the rock-bound coasts and islands for breeding purposes. This Pipit is always a restless little bird, constantly flitting from rock to rock as it searches diligently along the shore in search of food. If alarmed it flies round in a wavering, uncertain fashion before alighting on some steep cliff-face. Although not strictly gregarious, many pairs may be seen along a suitable stretch of coast-line. Two broods are usually reared in a season.

**Food.**—Largely insects, many of which are captured in the air. Small worms, grubs and seeds are also eaten, the latter chiefly in winter.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Seldom far from the sea. Placed on a bank, and sheltered by grass, sea-pink, heather or other plants. Often in a hole or crevice in the side of a cliff, and sometimes under a large stone or slab of rock. *Materials.* Dry grass and seaweed, lined with fine dry grass or hair.

**Eggs.**—4 or 5. Greyish, closely speckled with reddish



Photo: C. J. King

**Rock-Pipit**

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

brown; underlying markings grey. Size About .85 x .63 inches. Time. April to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Very like that of the Meadow-Pipit. A few simple tinkling notes, delivered either on the wing, or from a rock or mound. *Call.* A shrill *hist* or *pst*.

### BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL

*Motacilla flava*

**Description.**—*Male.* Distinguished from the Yellow Wagtail by the bluish grey crown, whitish chin and white stripe over the eye. There is sometimes a second white stripe through the ear-coverts. Length, about 6 inches. *Female.*

Closely resembles the female Yellow Wagtail, but the crown is slightly more bluish and the chin and eye-stripe are whitish. *Young.* Distinguished from those of the Yellow Wagtail by the whitish chin, more brownish back, and yellowish white eye-stripe.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor, also a somewhat rare passage-migrant. Breeds in small numbers in south-west Kent and south-east Sussex. It has nested several times in Wilts and Durham, and possibly in several other localities. Nested near Penzance in 1923, and at

Blue-headed Wagtail Female)

Seaford in 1922. Elsewhere has frequently been reported as a straggler, chiefly in the south of England, but has occurred in Scotland and Wales.

## YELLOW WAGTAIL

**Habits, Nest, Eggs and Notes.**—Similar to those of the Yellow Wagtail.

## YELLOW WAGTAIL

*Motacilla rayi*

**Description.—Male.** Bright olive above, the wing-coverts and primaries dark brown, margined with greyish yellow. Tail brownish black, edged with white. There is a line of bright yellow over the eye and ear-coverts. Under surface bright golden yellow.

Bill and legs black; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches. **Female.** Upper parts darker, eye-stripe paler, and the yellow of the under parts not nearly so brilliant. The colours of both sexes vary a good deal in intensity. **Young.** Much like the adult female, but browner in colour.

### Distribution.—

Summer visitor and passage-migrant. Widely distributed over the greater part of England and Wales, but somewhat local. In Devon, Cornwall, and in the west of Wales it occurs chiefly as a passage migrant. Much more local in Scotland, being most abundant in the Clyde district, and only a straggler to the greater part of the northern area. Very local in Ireland, nesting at Loughs Neagh, Corrib and Mask, and occurring in autumn on the Dublin coast and occasionally elsewhere.



Yellow Wagtail (Male)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Habits.**—Most of our Yellow Wagtails appear to arrive in the south-eastern corner of England, stragglers appearing towards the close of March, but the main body not reaching us before the first half of April, the males then being the more numerous. Most of the females appear to come during the second half of April. The southward movement often begins quite early in August, and is practically over by the third week of September. This beautiful Wagtail is a lover of marshlands, boggy portions of heaths, rush-grown commons, damp grass meadows, sewage farms, cultivated land intersected by dykes, and various other more or less moist situations. This bird appears to be much attached to a favourite nesting place, to which it will return year after year with great regularity. The Yellow Wagtail often feeds around grazing cattle, fluttering daintily into the air to seize winged insects disturbed by the animals, or running nimbly amongst the herbage almost at their feet.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvae chiefly, also small molluscs found in water-meadows.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Placed on the ground in mowing grass, in cornfields, amongst heather or rushes, in a cart-rut overgrown with herbage, and sometimes in grass covering a bank. *Materials.* Dry grass, bents and moss, lined with hair and fine grass.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Greyish white, spotted and mottled pretty evenly with varying shades of yellowish brown. *Size* About  $.78 \times .58$  inches. *Time.* May to July.

**Notes.**—Tz-ee or sipp-sipp.

## GREY WAGTAIL

*Motacilla cinerea*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts bluish grey. There is a white streak above and another below the eye. Wings brownish black, the inner secondaries margined with buffish white. Chin and throat black, remainder of under parts sulphur-yellow, brightest on the under tail-coverts. Tail blackish, broadly edged with white. Bill and legs brown; irides hazel. Length, about 7½ inches. *Female.* Rather smaller and not so black on the throat. The black on the throat is replaced by white in both sexes after the autumn moult. *Young.* Closely resemble the adult in winter dress. This species is sometimes confused with the Yellow Wagtail, but the grey upper parts, great length of tail, and in summer the black throat, are marks of distinction.

**Distribution.**—Resident, passage-migrant and summer visitor. Most numerous in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the north and west of England. Breeds sparingly in eastern and south-eastern counties of England.

**Habits.**—The Grey Wagtail is almost invariably found close to water, more especially running water, and is very partial in the breeding season to waterfalls and rock-strewn streams. In winter, when many birds forsake their nesting places for more southern localities, it is usually to be seen along rivers and streams, on the margins of lakes and ponds, or even by roadside ditches filled with water. These arrivals



Photo: Jasper Atkinson

Grey Wagtail

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

from the north generally appear in September, returning in March or early April. Small numbers appear on our east coast in autumn.

**Food.**—Mainly insects, including many aquatic species, also small crustaceans and molluscs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On shelves of rock, in crevices in rocky banks, in holes in walls, among ivy on steep banks, or under tree-roots. Generally near running water. *Materials.* Moss, rootlets, leaves and dry grasses, with a lining of hair and sometimes a few feathers.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Buff or greyish white, marbled or speckled with pale brown, with sometimes one or two blackish hair-lines. Somewhat resemble eggs of Yellow and Blue-headed Wagtails, and Sedge Warbler, but the situation of the nest is a safe guide. *Size.* About .75×.56 inches. *Time.* April to June, sometimes March or July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Apparently chiefly confined to the nesting season. A short twittering performance of no great merit. *Call.* *Szi.* A sweet low note is uttered in spring.

### PIED WAGTAIL

*Motacilla lugubris*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts black, except the forehead and sides of neck and head, which are white. Chin, throat and fore-breast black, rest of under parts white, with the exception of the sooty flanks. Wings black, the feathers margined with white; tail black, broadly edged with white. Bill and legs black; irides deep brown. Length, about 7½ inches. *Female.* Slate-grey on the back, mottled with black. Black on head and throat less extensive than in the male. *Young.* Closely resemble the female, but the grey parts are less pure, wings browner, and the white areas of the head are at times suffused with sulphur-yellow. In winter the black on the back of the adult male

## PIED WAGTAIL

is replaced by dark grey, the black on the rump being retained. The throat becomes white, but a crescent-shaped black gorget remains on the breast. Winter plumage of adult female very similar, but shows rather less black.

**Distribution.**—Resident, summer visitor and passage migrant. Generally distributed and common, but scarce visitor to Outer Hebrides, and a doubtful nesting species in the Shetlands.

**Habits.**—Although perhaps most frequently nesting near ponds, rivers, streams or lakes, the Pied Wagtail, or Dishwasher, is by no means averse to dry situations, and many pairs select a site at a considerable distance from water. This bird is common at all times of the year around dwellings and farm buildings. When fields are under the plough, numbers of Pied Wagtails will congregate upon the scene, running nimbly along the newly turned furrows in search of larvae. In fields grazing cattle are closely followed for the sake of the insects they disturb, and sheep-folds are much resorted to in search of food. Although many Pied Wagtails remain throughout the winter, considerable numbers leave our islands in autumn and return in early spring. There are also extensive local movements within the British Isles.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects and their larvae.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In ivy growing against walls or trees,



Pied Wagtail

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

in holes in walls, in faggot, corn, hay or brick stacks, amongst a heap of boulders, in a crevice in the face of a quarry, on banks overhung with tree-roots or herbage and various other situations. *Materials.* Dry grass, roots, moss, twigs or leaves, with a lining of horsehair, wool, feathers and fine grass.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Greyish white, thickly freckled with grey and light brown. Closely resemble certain types of House-Sparrows' eggs. *Size.* About '8 × '6 inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Song.*—A variation of the call, with a few more musical notes introduced. *Call.* Chiz-zit.

### WHITE WAGTAIL

*Motacilla alba*

**Description.**—*Male.* Differs in summer from male Pied Wagtail in having the back and rump pearl-grey, the shoulders grey instead of black and the flanks pearl-grey. Length, about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Female.* The grey on the back is purer than in the female of the pied species.



White Wagtail

various parts. Most frequent as a migrant on west coasts

## TREE-CREEPER

of Great Britain and Ireland, especially on Welsh coast, in the Northern Isles of Scotland, and in the Outer Hebrides. Less frequent on south and east coasts. Occasionally occurs inland.

**Habits.**—The spring migration of the White Wagtail extends from mid-March to early June, the return movement taking place from the middle of August to early October. The habits of this species are otherwise very similar to those of the Pied Wagtail.

**Food, Nest, Eggs and Notes.**—Very like those of the last-described bird.

## TREE-CREEPER

*Certhia familiaris*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts brown, mottled and streaked with greyish white and reddish brown, except on the rump and tail. There is a light brown bar, edged with black, across the wing, and some of the primaries are tipped with light grey. Under parts white, inclining to reddish white on the flanks and vent. The slender, decurved bill is brown, as are also the legs and irides. Tail feathers stiff and pointed. Length, about 5 inches. *Sexes alike.*

*Young.* Very similar to adults, but more mottled on the back, the beak being shorter and nearly straight.

**Distribution.**—Resident.

Generally distributed in suitable localities, but nowhere



Tree-Creeper

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

numerous. Rarely met with in the Orkneys and Shetlands, and has only once been noticed in the Outer Hebrides.

**Habits.**—The Tree-Creeper frequents almost any kind of wooded country, and is also very partial to orchards, especially those in which the trees are old. The bird is equally at home in the neighbourhood of dwellings and farm buildings, or in localities remote from either. Apart from its distinctive appearance, this bird may readily be recognized by its curious habit of ascending tree trunks with an almost running mouse-like action, the strong stiffened tail feathers being pressed closely against the bark so as to afford support. The ascent usually commences near the base of the trunk, and as the bird passes up the tree, it frequently pauses to inspect any cracks or holes wherein its insect quarry may lie concealed. In winter Tree-Creepers often join roaming companies of Titmice and Gold-crests, but it is seldom that more than one or two Creepers attach themselves to these nomadic parties.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects. Seeds of various kinds are sometimes eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Behind a loose piece of bark, in holes in trees, behind ivy stems, amongst piles of stacked timber or faggots, in crevices in buildings and under eaves.

**Materials.** Moss, grasses, fine twigs, with a lining of wool, feathers or strips of thin bark.

**Eggs.**—5 to 9. White, usually boldly marked with dark red or reddish purple. Sometimes the spots are evenly distributed, but more often take the form of a zone round the larger end. *Size.* About  $.66 \times .47$  inches. *Time.* Late April to June.

**Notes.**—Zit or a shrill cheep. The simple song is weak and plaintive.

## NUTHATCH

*Sitta europaea*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts bluish slate-grey; primaries darker, with light edges; central tail feathers slate, remainder black, tipped with slate-grey and edged with white. Under parts buff, fading to white on the chin, sides of head and under tail-coverts. Flanks rich chestnut-red. A black streak extends from the base of the bill to the eye, and passes down the side of the neck. Bill bluish black; legs light brown; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches. *Female.* Lighter on under parts. *Young.* Colours less pronounced. There is little or no chestnut on the flanks.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Fairly numerous in southern and central counties of England, but rare in Wales, especially in the west. Very local in Cheshire and Yorkshire, north of which only a straggler. Unknown in Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Nuthatch is most numerous in wooded country, and in park-lands and orchards containing a good supply of old trees. In such localities it often attracts attention by its habit of hammering a rotten branch with its powerful bill, the sound produced being audible at a considerable distance. This action no doubt disturbs the bird's insect prey concealed in rotten wood or beneath the



Nuthatch

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

bark; but the Nuthatch also uses its bill for the purpose of drilling nuts in order to extract the kernel, the shells being first firmly wedged into a crack in the bark. Certain trees are selected as anvils, and in these large collections of empty nut-shells may often be noticed. The Nuthatch is an active bird, and runs quickly up a branch or trunk in search of insect food, sometimes hanging head downwards as it pauses to examine a likely crevice. This species is a bird of sedentary habits, and is almost unknown beyond its breeding areas, although to a limited extent it wanders in winter.

**Food.**—Small insects and their larvæ, and in winter nuts and acorns.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally in a natural hole in a tree, but exceptionally in nest-boxes, sandbanks, holes in walls, or in haystacks. *Materials.* Leaves, flakes of bark or dry grass. The entrance is plastered round the edges with mud when too large, but even when a small hole is chosen, this usually shows traces of mud at the edges.

**Eggs.**—5 to 8, occasionally more. White, boldly spotted and blotched with reddish brown. *Size.* About .8 x .57 inches. *Time.* April to July.

**Notes.**—*Whit, whit, whit,* or *twit-twit*, also a clear, loud whistle.

A pleasing trill is the nearest approach to a song.

## GREAT TITMOUSE

*Parus major*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and sides of neck blue-black; checks white; nape greenish yellow, with a whitish spot in the centre. Back olive-green; rump bluish grey; wing-coverts bluish, the greater tipped with white, forming a distinct bar; quills bluish grey. Tail bluish-grey, the outer feathers margined with white. Breast and belly greenish yellow, divided by a broad blue-black band, which, commencing at the chin and passing down the throat, is joined by the black on the neck, and extends to the vent, which is white on either side. Bill black; legs bluish grey; irides dark brown. Length, about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Duller, the black replaced by dark brown. Cheeks and wing-bar yellowish.



Great Titmouse

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Common and generally distributed throughout the British Isles, except in the north of Scotland, where it becomes scarce.

**Habits.**—Our resident Great Tits are practically stationary, but large numbers of birds often arrive on our east coast in autumn. These migrants reach us from Northern Europe, and return in spring. The continental bird is irregular in appearing, some seasons being marked by a considerable influx, and in other years this autumn immigration is less pronounced. In winter this Titmouse is often a constant visitor to gardens in which nuts and fat are provided for its benefit, and during severe weather is rarely long absent from our homesteads, but in mild winters, especially when there is an abundant crop of beech-mast, its visits are much less

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

frequent. The nest is commonly found in almost any type of wooded country, also in gardens, orchards, parks, and on commons where there are old trees.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, nuts, fat, seeds, fruit and green peas.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In holes in trees, walls, or buildings, under inverted flower-pots, in old nests of the Rook, Crow, Magpie, Song Thrush or Blackbird, in nest-boxes, disused pumps, squirrels' dreys and various other situations. *Materials.* Chiefly moss, mixed with dry grass, wool or roots. The lining is made of hair, rabbits' fur, and sometimes feathers.

**Eggs.**—6 to 11, occasionally up to 17. White, spotted with pale red. Sometimes the markings form a belt round the broader end, and at other times are evenly dispersed over the entire shell. *Size.* About .7 x .53 inches.

*Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—A clear *pinker* several times repeated, a sharp *tink, tink*, or a scolding chatter, suggesting the notes of a Magpie, although not nearly so loud.

## BLUE TITMOUSE

*Parus cæruleus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead white; crown azure blue, under which runs a white band on either side. A bluish black line passes from the base of the beak through the eye. Cheeks white, a band of dusky blue extending from the nape to the throat, where it becomes almost black. Nape blue; back and rump yellowish green; wings and tail blue, the former barred with white. Under parts sulphur-yellow. Bill black; legs lead-blue; irides deep brown. Length, about 4½ inches. *Sexes alike*, except that

## BLUE TITMOUSE

the female is rather duller. *Young.* More yellowish than ~~Blue Tits.~~

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Common and generally distributed, but rare and very local in the extreme north of Scotland. Unknown in Outer Hebrides, the Orkney and the Shetland Islands as a breeding species.

**Habits.**—Our nesting Blue Tits appear to be stationary, except perhaps for some local wandering in winter, but in autumn large numbers sometimes reach us from the Continent, often travelling with immigrant Great Tits. The Tom-Tit, as it is frequently named, is undoubtedly the most familiar Titmouse, breeding in populated areas even more frequently than the Great Titmouse. Many pairs find congenial nesting quarters in street lamp-posts in the quieter thoroughfares of large towns, and to gardens both in town and country this little bird is a constant and welcome visitor. In winter the Blue Tit associates with other kinds of titmice, but flocks consisting entirely of the blue species sometimes occur.

**Food.**—Insects, buds, nuts, seeds, and sometimes fruit.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a hole in a tree, wall or gate-post, also in letter-boxes, pumps, lamp-posts, inverted flower-pots, nest-boxes, and occasionally in holes in banks. Often near dwellings, but frequently in woods, fields, or lanes some distance from habitations. *Materials.* Moss and dead grass, with a thick lining of wool, hair, and sometimes feathers.



Blue Titmouse

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Eggs.**—6 to 12. When more are found they are probably the product of two females. White, finely spotted or speckled with light reddish brown, sometimes in the form of a zone round the larger end. **Size.** About .6 x .46 inches. **Time.** April to June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* *Chipsee, wee, wee, wee, wee.* *Call.* *Twe, twe.* *Alarm note.* A hissing sound.

### COAL-TITMOUSE

*Parus ater*

**Description.**—**Male.** Head, neck and throat glossy blue-black; nape and cheeks white. Mantle and wings olive-grey; rump greyish, tinged with buff; tail greyish brown.

Wing-coverts tipped with white, forming a double bar. Breast dull white; flanks, belly and under tail-coverts fawn-colour, the flanks shaded with rufous. Bill black; legs lead-grey; irides hazel. Length, about 4½ inches. **Sexes alike.** Easily distinguished from the Marsh Tit by the white on the nape and cheeks. **Young.** Black parts without gloss, the white on the nape, cheeks and breast tinged with sulphur-yellow.



Coal-Titmouse

**Distribution.**—Resident. Generally distributed, and common in many parts, but it is rarely seen in Caithness, and is not known to have occurred in the Orkneys, Shetlands and Outer Hebrides.

## *CRESTED TITMOUSE*

**Habits.**—The Coal-Tit is most numerous in wooded districts, and is especially partial to coniferous trees, being often extremely abundant in extensive tracts of pine-clad country. It is also found in gardens, plantations, orchards and coppices. This bird is stationary, except for some local movement on the approach of winter, and although not such a constant winter inhabitant of our gardens as the Great and Blue Tits, the Coal-Tit is by no means an uncommon visitor, and is noticeably more frequent about our homesteads at this season than during the summer months. The mixed winter flocks of titmice often contain many Coal-Tits, and fairly large parties consisting entirely of this species are not unusual.

**Food.**—Insects, nuts, especially beech-mast, fat, and seeds of conifers.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In holes in decayed tree-stumps, or in holes in walls or banks, in nest-boxes, and sometimes in squirrels' dreys or disused Magpies' nests. *Materials.* Moss and dry grass, lined with hair, rabbits' fur, wool or feathers.

**Eggs.**—6 to 11. White, spotted and freckled with pale red, sometimes with deep red. Closely resemble those of the other members of the Tit family, the Great Tit's larger eggs excepted. *Size.* About .62 × .47 inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Tu-he, tu-he, tu-he.* Sometimes *tweet* or *tweet-le*.

## *CRESTED TITMOUSE*

*Parus cristatus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head feathers black, edged with greyish white, and elongated so as to form a conspicuous crest. A black line passes from the base of the beak to the nape, and extends downwards, partially encircling the white cheeks. Below this line is a band of white, which gives place to a narrow curving black line descending

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

from the nape and joining the black on the chin, throat and upper part of breast. Upper parts brown, darkest on wings and tail. Lower breast and belly dull white; flanks and under tail-coverts buff. Bill black; legs lead-grey; irides brown. Length, about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Female.* Crest shorter, and there is less black on the chin, throat and fore-breast, otherwise similar to male. *Young.* Upper parts darker and greyer than in the adult, and under parts duller. Crest less developed.



Crested Titmouse

**Distribution.**—Resident. Confined to Scotland, where it is extremely local, breeding chiefly in the pine-wood districts of

the Spey Valley, although in recent years it has been found nesting in several localities in the Findhorn Valley, and has also been observed in east Ross-shire, where it has possibly nested.

**Habits.**—The Crested Tit is very rarely met with outside its breeding areas even in winter, and at least some of the stragglers which have occurred from time to time in other parts of the British Isles have possibly wandered from the Continent. A bird which is easily recognized, it is improbable that wanderers have escaped notice to any great extent. In its actions the Crested Tit closely resembles the other members of the Titmouse family, with which it sometimes associates in autumn and winter, when wandering about in small flocks. The nest is by no means

## MARSH-TITMOUSE

easily discovered, as the breeding pairs are scattered over an extensive area of pine forests.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvae, also small seeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually in a hole in a decayed stump, branch, or trunk of a pine tree; sometimes in a hole in a fence-post. A few inches to ten or twelve feet from the ground. *Materials.* Dead grass, moss, deers' hair, lined with down of rabbits or hares, and sometimes wool, feathers, or vegetable down.

**Eggs.**—5 or 6. White, spotted and blotched with varying shades of red, the markings usually most numerous at the larger end. *Size.* About .65 × .51 inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Si, si, si,* followed by a spluttering *ptur, re, re*, *re, ree.*

## MARSH-TITMOUSE

*Parus palustris*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, nape and hind-neck glossy black; cheeks dirty white. Back olive-brown, slightly reddish on the rump; wings and tail greyish brown. Chin and throat black. Under parts greyish white, shading to buff on the flanks. Bill black; legs bluish black; irides dark brown. Length, about 4½ inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Similar to adults, but decidedly duller.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Rather locally distributed in England and Wales, and apparently very rare in the extreme north of the Principality. Not known to occur in Anglesey. Apparently replaced by the Willow-Tit in Scotland, and is absent from Ireland.

**Habits.**—This bird is often found nesting in marshy spots, especially where there are old and decayed willows, but is by no means confined to such situations, being equally at home in dry woods, orchards, and spinneys, or along hedgerows containing decayed tree-stumps. The Marsh-

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Tit associates with other members of the family as autumn approaches, but is usually only met with in small numbers. Gardens are sometimes resorted to for nesting purposes, but even in winter this species occurs less frequently around

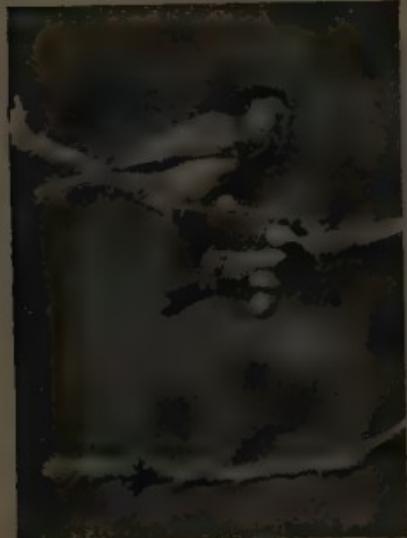
habitations than the Blue and Great Titmice. This bird is particularly partial to thistle seeds, differing in this respect from other titmice. The downy heads are usually conveyed to the branch of a tree, or to the top of a fence-post, in order that the seed may be easily extracted.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects, but in autumn and winter nuts, seeds and berries are largely consumed. Beech-mast is much appreciated, and in seasons when there is a plentiful crop, forms an important item of the Marsh-Tit's diet.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In holes in trees, old hedge-stumps, gate-posts, walls and banks. Sometimes in nest-boxes. Usually at no great height from the ground. When in rotten trees or stumps, the hole is sometimes enlarged by the bird. *Materials.* Moss, thickly lined with hair, rabbits' down, wool, and sometimes willow-down.

**Eggs.**—5 or 6 to 10. White, spotted with reddish brown or pale red. Sometimes the spots are small, but some clutches are boldly marked. *Size.* About  $.63 \times .49$  inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Chee, chee.* Sometimes a shrill *sip, sip, sip.*



Marsh-Titmouse

## WILLOW-TITMOUSE

*Parus atricapillus*

**Description.**—Differs from the Marsh-Tit but slightly. The black areas of the head and neck are devoid of gloss, the flanks more rufous, and the secondaries show pale buff margins. The tail is more rounded, the graduated feathers showing distinctly when spread. Under parts more inclined to buff.

**Distribution.**—Imperfectly known. The bird has been noticed in many parts of England, especially in the southern counties, and has been recorded from North Wales. In Scotland apparently replaces the Marsh-Tit.

**Habits.**—Closely resemble those of the preceding species. The nest-hole is said to be usually excavated by the bird in rotten wood, and to contain very little nesting material.

**Notes.**—The clear nightingale-like notes of the Willow-Tit appear to be distinctive.

## LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE

*Ægithalos caudatus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown dull white, a broad black band extending from the base of the bill over the eye and ear-coverts to the back of the neck. Cheeks and ear-coverts white, nape black. Mantle glossy black; lower back and rump rose-colour; upper tail-coverts black. Wings blackish, with white edges to the secondaries; tail black, the three outer feathers margined and tipped with white. Under parts greyish white, shading to pale rose on the flanks and under tail-coverts. Bill and legs black; irides hazel. Length, about 5½ inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Duller than adults. The rose tints are absent. The black and rose colouring, and great length of tail distinguish this species from other titmice.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Generally distributed in most localities, but very scarce in some districts of the north and west of Scotland and somewhat local in other parts of Scotland.

**Habits.**—The Long-tailed Tit frequents commons, especially those where gorse and thorn bushes are numerous, tall

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

ragged hedgerows, thickets, copses and the more open parts of woods. In winter it fraternizes with other titmice, Goldcrests and Tree-Creepers, or moves about in family



Long-tailed Titmouse

parties consisting entirely of its own species. As the birds flit from bush to bush they call incessantly, and when crossing an open space pass in single file. The acrobatic performances of this sprightly little bird are assisted by the long tail, which it uses skilfully as a means of balance. Unlike other members of the family the Long-tailed or Bottle-Tit does not visit our gardens in winter to feed upon nuts and fat.

**Food.**—Various insects, and occasionally seeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Black-

thorn, whitethorn, gorse, holly, bramble or other tall, thick bushes, exceptionally on a branch or in the fork of a tree. Generally fairly low down, but when in trees sometimes 30 to 40 feet from the ground. Oval shaped, with an entrance near the top. Often commenced during March. *Materials.* Moss, wool, lichen, hair, cob-webs, lined abundantly with feathers.

**Eggs.**—7 to 12. When more are found they are probably the production of two females. White, with tiny faint red spots, sometimes collected round the larger end, at other times thinly scattered over the entire shell. Occasionally without markings. *Size.* About .55 x .43 inches. *Time.* April and May.

**Notes.**—Zee, zee, zee; chizz or ze-rup.

## GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN

*Regulus regulus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead and area round eyes whitish, tinged with olive-green. Crown golden yellow, more orange towards the hind part, the feathers forming a slight crest bounded on either side by a black streak. Rest of upper parts olive-green, darkest on the tail. Primaries dark greyish brown, margined with greenish yellow; coverts black tipped with white and forming two bars plainly visible in flight. Under parts greyish white, tinged with buff on the throat, breast and flanks. Bill black; legs brown; irides hazel. Length, about 3½ inches. *Female.* Under parts dull buff, the yellow on the crown paler, otherwise closely resembles male. *Young.* Similar to female, but lack the yellow on the crest, and are duller and darker.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Generally distributed, except in the extreme north-west of Scotland, where it becomes local. In Outer Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands occurs commonly as a spring and autumn migrant, although it has nested very occasionally in the two first-named groups.

**Habits.**—Woods, spinneys, large gardens, wooded commons, shrubberies and small groups of trees form the summer haunts of the Gold-Crest, and although it is very partial to districts where coniferous trees abound it is by no means confined to such localities. In winter, although still remaining numerous amongst woods and plantations, the bird at this season becomes more nomadic, visiting parks, gardens,



GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN AT NEST

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

commons and hedgerows at some distance from the breeding places. Gold-Crests from the Continent reach our eastern coast in large numbers in autumn, passing through the British Isles to more southern winter quarters. Winter flocks of Titmice, Treec-Creepers and Nuthatches are often joined by Gold-Crests, but fairly large parties consisting entirely of the species under notice are by no means exceptional.

### Food.—Insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In coniferous trees, less frequently placed in yews, holly, gorse and juniper. Sometimes amongst ivy on a tree-trunk or in creepers. When in trees, generally suspended from and near the end of a horizontal branch. From two or three to thirty or more feet from the ground. *Materials.* Green moss, lichens, fine grass, spiders' webs and hair, neatly put together. The lining is made of feathers and sometimes down.

**Eggs.**—7 to 12. Pale flesh-colour or faint brown, rarely white, suffused chiefly at the larger end with pale reddish brown. *Size.* About  $.56 \times .42$  inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A simple repetition of two high-pitched notes, not audible at any great distance. *Call.* See, see, see.

## FIRE-CRESTED WREN

*Regulus ignicapillus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Closely resembles the male Gold-Crest, but is more brightly coloured. The most distinctive features are a broad white line above the eye, and a narrower one below, also a conspicuous black bar before and behind the eye. The orange on the crown is more extensive than in the Gold-Crest, the under parts are lighter and the mantle greener. *Female.* Duller and the crown is lemon-yellow. The white stripes above and below, and the black line through the eye distinguish the bird from the Gold-Crest.

## BEARDED TITMOUSE

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Fairly frequent along the south and east coasts of England, less frequently observed farther inland. It has occurred as far north as Cumberland and Northumberland, and rarely in Wales.

**Habits.**—The Fire-Crest usually arrives in October in company with migrating Gold-Crests, the return movement in spring lasting until April. The bird is generally met with singly or in pairs, and frequently associates with its commoner relative.

**Notes.**—*Zit, zit.* Said to be less shrill than the Gold-Crest's call.

## BEARDED TITMOUSE

*Panurus brunnneus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown bluish grey, ear-coverts and sides of neck pale grey. A black patch from the lores extends so as partly to encircle the eye, and joins a black moustache-like streak. From the nape to the rump the plumage is golden brown. The long tail is deep rufous brown, the three outer pairs of feathers having white tips and blackish bases. Wings black and greyish, bordered and tipped with white and deep rusty red. Chin and throat greyish white; breast pinkish; flanks tawny orange; abdomen sandy buff; under tail-coverts black. Bill and irides yellow; legs black.



Bearded Titmouse (Male)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Length, about 6 inches. *Female.* Lacks the black and grey on the head and black on tail. Crown dull brown, breast lighter than that of male; under tail-coverts pale golden brown. *Young.* Resemble female, but head and back streaked with dark brown. Irides brown.

**Distribution.**—Resident in the Norfolk Broads and one locality in Devon. A rare vagrant elsewhere, except in Suffolk, where it possibly still breeds on some Broads.

**Habits.**—The Bearded Tit, Reed-Pheasant or Bearded Reedling, even in its Broadland home, is restricted in its habitat, being quite numerous in some localities, but scarcely known as a nesting species in others. It frequents dense masses of sedge and tall reeds, and on account of its striking coloration is a bird which can hardly fail to attract attention. After the chicks have left the nest, old and young remain together, and there is no more delightful Broadland sight than a family party of Bearded Reedlings. After the breeding season these family gatherings unite, and in winter the flocks sometimes contain as many as forty birds. The species is remarkably sedentary, and even in winter is rarely found far from its breeding grounds.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, small molluscs, and in winter probably seeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Low down in a tuft of sedge or coarse grass, sometimes amongst a mass of fallen decayed sedge, but never suspended. Well concealed. *Materials.* Dead blades of sedge or reed, lined with fine grass, seed-down, or reed flowers, and sometimes a few feathers.

**Eggs.**—4 to 7. White, marked sparingly with small specks and short irregular streaks of liver-brown. *Size.* About .7 x .56 inches. *Time.* March to July.

**Notes.**—A musical *ping, ping.* *Alarm.* A scolding *pwhut.*

## GREAT GREY SHRIKE

*Lanius excubitor*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts pearl-grey, with white scapulars. A black patch extends from the lores to the ear-coverts, the chin and cheeks are white, and a white stripe passes over the eye. Under parts white, faintly tinged with grey. Wings black, with a single or double white bar; tail black, with broad graduated white edges. Bill and legs black; irides dark brown. Length, about 9½ inches. *Female.* Grey of upper parts less pure. Under parts greyer, faintly barred with brown.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor and passage-migrant. Occurs chiefly on the east side of Great Britain. Seldom observed in Ireland. A regular autumn and occasional spring bird of passage. Rarely seen in summer.

**Habits.**—The Great Grey Shrike arrives from mid-October onwards and is usually seen singly, but exceptionally appears in fair numbers on the coast, the birds scattering as they wander inland. This bird frequently selects as a perch the top of a tall bush or small tree, from which it keeps an ever watchful eye upon passing insects, which are captured on the wing. It also feeds upon mice, lizards and small birds, sometimes impaling its victims on sharp thorns after the manner of the Red-backed Shrike.

**Notes.**—A harsh *shake*. The warbling song has been heard in England as early as December.

## WOODCHAT SHRIKE

*Lanius senator*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown and nape chestnut; forehead, ear-coverts, sides of neck and back black. Lores, scapulars and under parts white. Wings black, crossed by a white bar; tail black, edged and tipped with white. Rump grey. Bill black; legs and irides brown. Length, about 7 inches. *Female.* Duller. More rufous on the upper parts.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Distribution.**—Occasional visitor, chiefly to the south-eastern counties of England. It has always been observed between spring and autumn, most frequently in May and June.

### RED-BACKED SHRIKE

*Lanius collurio*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, nape, back of neck and rump ash-grey. Back and scapulars bright chestnut-red; wings dark brown, the feathers edged with reddish brown. Chin and sides of neck white; breast pale rose-pink; under tail-coverts white. The feathers at the base of the upper mandible, around the eye and as far as the ear-coverts are black. There is a whitish streak over the eye. Tail feathers white on the basal half, more or less edged with black, remainder black. The strong black bill is hooked at the tip. Legs black; irides brown. Length, about 7 inches. *Female.*



Red-backed Shrike (Male)

greyish white, barred with dark brown; eye-streak buff. *Young.* Browner, duller and more distinctly barred than female, which they otherwise closely resemble.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and passage-migrant. Irregularly dispersed over the southern and midland counties of England and in Wales. Very local in Cheshire and

## *RED-BACKED SHRIKE*

Yorkshire, north of which it does not breed regularly. Occurs as a passage-migrant in Scotland, chiefly on the east side. To Ireland it is only an occasional wanderer.

**Habits.**—The Red-backed Shrike seldom appears before the first week of May, and by the third week of that month the spring movement is practically over. The return migration commences early, the majority of birds having passed overseas by the close of August. Tall tangled hedgerows, thickets of maythorn, bramble, or wild rose, commons thickly covered with dense bushes, railway embankments clothed with gorse or other thick bushes, form the nesting haunts of the Butcher Bird. Nest-building commences very shortly after the birds have reached their breeding places, the full clutch of eggs sometimes being deposited before the end of May. The habit of impaling small birds, mice and large insects upon a thornbush has given rise to the name of Butcher Bird. These gruesome collections of victims are known as the "larder."

**Food.**—Small birds, mice, lizards and various insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In tall rough hedges, in bramble, maythorn, gorse, holly or other thick bushes. *Materials.* Small twigs, dead grass, moss and wool, lined with fibrous roots, hair and fine grasses.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6, occasionally 7. White, cream, salmon-pink, pale brown or greenish in ground colour, spotted or blotched with olive-brown, reddish brown or brick-red. The underlying markings are grey, salmon, or violet-grey. The spots and blotches often form a zone round the larger end.  
**Size.** About .9 > .66 inches. **Time.** May and June.

**Notes.**—A harsh *thack* or a sharp chirp. **Song.** A soft warble.

## WAXWING

*Bombycilla garrulus*

**Description.**—*Male.* General colour reddish brown, greyish on the back. Lores, throat and a band at base of bill black. A black streak extends on either side of the eye. The chestnut crown feathers form a long erectile crest,



Photo: Miss E. L. Turner

Waxwing

Rump and tail grey, the latter shading into black and terminating in a broad band of yellow, sometimes with small wax-like red tips; under tail-coverts chestnut; wings blackish, with a conspicuous white bar, the inner edges of the primaries white and the outer yellow. Secondaries tipped with bright red wax-like projections. Bill and legs black; irides hazel. There is a short white line at the base of the lower mandible. Length, about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Sexes alike.*

**Distribution.**—An irregular autumn and winter visitor, occa-

sionally occurring in spring. Most frequent in winter months. Sometimes visits us in considerable numbers, and has been recorded from most English counties, but chiefly on the eastern side. Less frequent in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The last invasion was in November, 1921, and was most noticeable in the south-east of Scotland and the north-east of England.

## SPOTTED FLYCATCHER

*Muscicapa striata*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts dull brown, the crown spotted with darker brown. Under surface dirty white, streaked on the breast with dusky brown. Bill blackish brown; legs black; irides dark brown. Length, about

## SPOTTED FLYCATCHER

6 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. Mottled conspicuously on the upper parts with buff and spotted rather than streaked on the breast.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. Generally distributed, except in the extreme north of the Scottish mainland, where it occurs on migration but seldom nests, and in the Orkneys, Shetlands and Outer Hebrides. In the two first-named groups it is an occasional visitor, and has bred in the Orkneys, but to the Outer Hebrides it is only a rare wanderer.

**Habits.**—The Spotted Flycatcher is one of our latest migrants to arrive, usually not appearing before early May, and the migratory movement is at its height by the middle of that month. Most of the birds have departed by the third week of September, although stragglers have been noted in October. This bird is most frequently met with in gardens or in other situations in the vicinity of dwellings and outbuildings, but many pairs find a home far from habitations. The Spotted Flycatcher is a comparatively silent bird, of subdued coloration and unobtrusive habits, and it is consequently not so widely known as many other species which resort to our gardens for nesting purposes. When on the watch for winged insects, this little bird usually selects a dead branch, or a rail, post or fence-top, from which it makes short flights in pursuit of its prey, seldom failing to effect a capture.

**Food.**—Insects of various kinds.



Spotted Flycatcher

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Among creepers on houses and out-buildings or on a projecting beam, behind ivy growing on trees, in holes in walls, on horizontal branches of fruit trees growing against walls, in trellis-work, and various other situations. *Materials.* Moss, fibrous roots, bents and cob-webs, to which are sometimes added pieces of bark and lichens. The lining consists of hair, wool and a few feathers. Rather loosely constructed.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6, usually 5. Greyish or yellowish white, sometimes pale green in ground-colour, closely freckled or boldly blotched with reddish brown and underlying markings of purplish brown. Some eggs are very lightly marked and at times the spots tend to form a zone round the larger end. *Size.* About .75 × .57 inches. *Time.* May to July.

**Notes.**—Zi-tick or zi, tick-tick.

### \* PIED FLYCATCHER

*Muscicapa hypoleuca*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead and under parts white; tail edged with white. Remainder of plumage black, with the exception of a conspicuous white patch on the wing. Bill and legs black; irides brown. Length, about 5 inches. *Female.* The feathers which are black in the male bird are olive-brown in the female, as is also the forehead. White wing-patch more restricted. Under parts tinged with buff on the breast and flanks. Sexes very similar after autumn moult. *Young.* Resemble adult female, but the upper parts are spotted with buff.

**Distribution.**—Summer resident and a bird of passage. Breeds locally in the six most northern counties of England, in very small numbers in Shropshire and Devonshire, and has nested occasionally in many other counties, including some southern ones. Breeds commonly in North and Central

## PIED FLYCATCHER

Wales. In Scotland it is a very local nesting species in Dumfries, and has bred in several other southern counties and as far north as Inverness and Ross. In Ireland only known as a vagrant.

**Habits.**—The usual time of arrival of the Pied Flycatcher is towards the close of April, the movement lasting until about mid-May. The return journey begins in late August, lasting through September. During the migration period, birds are often noticed in localities remote from their breeding places, and have been observed as passage-migrants in the Orkneys and Shetlands. Unlike the preceding species, the Pied Flycatcher resorts chiefly to wooded valleys and hill-sides far from habitations during the breeding season. Although often found nesting near running water, such conditions are by no means essential. Old woods containing many decayed trees are the bird's favourite haunts, and a chosen nesting site is often occupied year after year.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In holes in trees or stumps, sometimes in holes in walls or in rock crevices. At varying heights from a foot or two to thirty feet from the ground. *Materials.* Dead leaves and grass mixed with moss, lined with dry grass, rootlets, hair, feathers or wool. Loosely constructed.

**Eggs.**—5 to 8. Uniform pale blue or greenish blue, exceptionally marked with a few reddish spots. *Size.* About  $.75 \times .55$  inches. *Time.* May and June. The birds should



Pied Flycatcher (Male)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

be carefully identified at the nest, otherwise the eggs may be easily confused with those of the Redstart, which often breeds in similar situations.

**Notes.**—Song. Short, lively and oft-repeated. Not unlike that of the Redstart. Other notes closely resemble those of the Spotted Flycatcher.

### CHIFFCHAFF

*Phylloscopus collybita*

**Description.**—*Male.* Olive-green above, wings and tail brown, edged with olive-green. A pale yellow streak runs from the base of the bill over the eye. Under surface of body white, tinged with greenish yellow and grey. Bill dark brown; legs blackish brown; irides hazel. Length, about 4½ inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. Greener than adults, the eye-streak less distinct.



Chiffchaff

**Distribution.**—Summer resident and passage-migrant. Well distributed, but rare or local in Norfolk, Lancashire, and parts of Yorkshire. In Scotland it is mainly confined to the south as a nesting species, and elsewhere occurs chiefly as a somewhat rare passage-migrant, for the most part on the east side.

**Habits.**—The Chiffchaff is one of the earliest migrants to

reach our shores, arriving in the south about mid-March, but it is during the last week of that month and the first half of April that the greatest influx takes place. The return

## WILLOW-WARBLER

movement begins in September, but a considerable number of birds delay their departure until October. Occasionally the Chiffchaff remains with us throughout the winter, especially in the extreme south-western counties of England. During the nesting period this little Warbler is mainly confined to woods and plantations, but in early spring and also in autumn may frequently be seen in town and country gardens. This bird is far more of a woodland species than the Willow-Warbler, and its song is more often uttered from the tops of tall trees.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects and their larvæ.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually on or near the ground, but not infrequently at some distance above it. Often built close to a path or clearing in a wood, or on a hedge-bank, and is generally found amongst brambles, bracken or long grass. Globular in shape, with the opening in the side and near the top. *Materials.* Withered leaves, dead grass and moss, with a lining of hair and feathers.

**Eggs.**—5 to 7. White, spotted chiefly at the broader end with dark purple-brown. The spots vary in number and size, but are generally darker and fewer than those upon eggs of the Willow-Warbler. Sets in which the markings are more reddish brown require careful identification. *Size.* About .64 x .48 inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Chiff, chaff, chiff, chiff, chaff, the notes not always repeated in the same order. *Call.* A plaintive hweet or whoo-it.

## WILLOW-WARBLER

*Phylloscopus trochilus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Very closely resembles the Chiffchaff, but may be distinguished by the pale brown legs, which in the allied species are blackish brown. In spring the Willow-Warbler's plumage is brighter than the Chiffchaff's, and the under parts are more yellowish white. Length, about 4½ inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Very similar to the adult.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Distribution.**—Summer resident and a bird of passage. Abundant and widely distributed throughout the British Isles, although somewhat local in Cornwall and parts of the north and west of Scotland. Occasionally remains throughout the winter in the south of England and in Ireland.



Willow-Warbler

**Habits.**—The Willow-Warbler, or Willow-Wren, is undoubtedly the most numerous of all the British Warblers, and may be found nesting in almost any situation where there are scattered trees or bushes, being entirely absent as a breeding species only in wide tracts of treeless country. The

earliest arrivals reach our shores towards the close of March, and throughout April the birds arrive in countless thousands all along our southern seaboard. During the latter part of April and in early May, after most of our nesting birds have settled in their summer quarters, Willow-Wrens are still arriving on the east coast, and these are no doubt passage-migrants which do not remain to rear their broods, passing on to breeding grounds in the far north of Europe. The return migration extends from August until early October. A good deal of local movement is noticeable during July.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects and their larvæ. The bird is most useful in destroying large numbers of aphides.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally placed on a bank or on level ground, amongst coarse grasses and weeds, heather, bracken, gorse, or wedged between large fern roots.

## WOOD-WARBLER

Occasionally placed two or three feet above the ground in heather, bramble or small bushes. Similar in form to that of the Chiffchaff but with a rather larger aperture. *Materials.* Very similar to those employed by the preceding species.

**Eggs.**—5 to 8, usually 6 or 7. White, spotted with pale rust-colour. In some specimens the spots are minute and distributed over the entire surface, in others they are larger and less numerous. The markings sometimes form a ring round the larger end, the remainder of the shell being thinly spotted. *Size.* About .64 × .47 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A pure and very sweet warble, commencing with a few strong full notes, then running down the scale and ending in a mere murmur. It is quite unlike the much inferior performance of the Chiffchaff, and provides a sure means of establishing the bird's identity. *Call.* A soft *hoo-it.*

## WOOD-WARBLER

*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, neck, back and upper tail-coverts olive-green, tinged with yellow; under parts white with a decided yellowish tint on the throat, breast and thighs. There is a broad sulphur-yellow eye-stripe. Wings and tail dusky brown, edged with yellowish green. Bill, legs and irides brown. Length, about 5 inches. *Sexes alike.* Larger than Willow-Warbler and Chiffchaff, upper parts greener and under parts whiter. Eye-stripe broader. *Young.* Yellower than adults.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. Widely but unevenly distributed in England and Wales, and even more local in Scotland. Very scarce in Ireland, nesting in limited numbers in Queen's County, Wicklow and Galway.

**Habits.**—The Wood-Warbler, as its name denotes, is a frequenter of tree-clad country, and is particularly partial

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to beech and oak woods. In some parts, where woods of this description are extensive, the bird is extremely numerous, and often outnumbers both the Chiffchaff and Willow-Warbler. This little Warbler is very much a bird of the tree-tops, from which it delights to pour forth its characteristic song hour after hour, during hot May and June days. In the south of England the Wood-Warbler arrives about the middle of April, although not generally dispersed until early May. The return migration is accomplished in August and September.



Wood-Warbler

well clothed with tall trees. Generally carefully concealed amongst bracken, long grass, dogs-mercury or other plants. Dome-shaped. *Materials.* Withered leaves, dry grass and moss, lined with hair or fine bents. Distinguished from nests of Willow-Warbler and Chiffchaff by absence of feathers in the lining.

**Eggs.**—5 to 7, rarely 8. White, thickly spotted or speckled all over with deep purplish brown and ash-grey. Sometimes markings more thickly congregated at larger end. *Size.* 65 × .56 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Commences with a plaintive *twee*, several times repeated, followed by a shivering trill.\* Sings with

\* The plaintive opening notes are often omitted.

## GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER

much vehemence, the wings and tail vibrating as the bird pours forth its silvery notes. *Call.* *Dee-ur.*

## YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER

*Phylloscopus humei*

**Description.**—*Male.* Olive-green above, yellowish on the rump and upper tail-coverts. Wings and tail brown, the former showing two distinct bars of light yellow. There is a conspicuous yellow eye-stripe extending to the nape. Under surface yellowish white. Bill, legs and irides brown. Length, about 3½ inches. *Sexes alike.*

**Distribution.**—An almost regular autumn bird of passage in very small numbers along the east coast. Has frequently been recorded from Fair Isle (Shetlands) in recent years. It has been noticed occasionally in the west and once in Ireland. Usually occurs from mid-September to late October, and has been observed on more than one occasion in April.

## GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER

*Locustella nævia*

**Description.**—*Male.* Olive-brown above, streaked with blackish brown. There is a faint yellowish white eye-stripe. Wings and tail rather darker brown than the rest of the upper parts, the feathers margined with a lighter shade. Tail faintly barred, and rounded at the tip. Under surface whitish on the throat and belly, pale brown on the breast, which is sometimes slightly spotted; flanks darker brown. Bill brown; legs pale yellowish brown; irides hazel. Length, about 5½ inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* More buffish on the under parts.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. Fairly well distributed in suitable places in England, being locally tolerably abundant,

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

but rare in extreme south-west and very local in Wales. In Scotland it is local and thinly distributed, being entirely absent from some of the northern parts. Widely spread in Ireland, except on the west coast, where it is scarce.



Grasshopper-Warbler

**Habits.**—The Grasshopper-Warbler usually arrives from mid-April to early May. It has been noticed on the return migration from the middle of August to early October, but the records are insufficient to form any definite conclusion as to the time of its departure. A bird of skulking habits, and consequently liable to be overlooked, this Warbler frequents marshes affording dense cover, swampy clearings in woods, boggy commons clad with gorse or heather and dry moorlands. It is not by any means confined to low

ground, being found at considerable altitudes. During some years this species is much more abundant than in others.

**Food.**—Apparently composed entirely of insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Upon or near the ground, amongst dense water-plants, in gorse, long heather or rank grass. Well hidden and very difficult to discover. *Materials.* Dry grass and moss, sometimes a little lichen or a few leaves. The lining is made of fine dry grass.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Pinkish white, profusely speckled all over with red-brown. Sometimes the markings are more thickly distributed at the larger end. *Size.* About  $.72 \times .54$  inches. *Time.* May to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A chirping trill, which has been compared

## REED-WARBLER

to the notes of the grasshopper, the rattle of a mowing machine, or the noise produced by an angler's reel. Most frequently heard at sunrise, at dusk and during the night.  
*Call.* *Tic, tic.*

## REED-WARBLER

*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

**Description.—Male.** Olive-brown above, suffused with chestnut, especially on the rump and upper tail-coverts. An ill-defined buff stripe passes from the base of the bill over the eye. Chin and throat white; breast, flanks and under tail-coverts pale buff.

Wings brown; belly greyish white. Bill dark horn-brown above, lighter below. Legs slaty brown; irides brown. Length, about 5½ inches.

**Female.** Similarly coloured, but slightly smaller. **Young.** Resemble the adults, except that they are very tawny on the under parts.

**Distribution.—** Summer resident. Local, but fairly well distributed in suitable localities in the southern, midland and eastern counties of England, being found as far north as Yorkshire and Lancashire. It is rare in the south-west of England and in Wales. In Scotland and Ireland has been noticed on rare occasions as a passage-migrant.

**Habits.—**This Warbler usually arrives in England towards the end of April or early in May, the return movement taking place in September. It haunts reed-grown dykes



Photo. Howard Bentham  
Reed-Warbler

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

and ponds, disused canals, and the edges of lakes, rivers and broads, but the bird may also be found in marshy coves, thickets of willow, and even in gardens. It is seldom or never found far from water. The Reed-Warbler is somewhat conservative in its selection of a breeding haunt, being abundant in one locality, but absent from another in the same neighbourhood which does not provide suitable nesting cover. This species is often selected by the Cuckoo as a foster-parent.

**Food.**—Chiefly caterpillars, various aquatic and other insects, especially aphides.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Attached to three or four reed stems growing out of water or in very marshy ground, but also fastened to willows, willow-herb, or even thorn, fruit, or other bushes. The structure is a marvel of bird architecture, and is usually deep and compact. *Materials.* Dry grass and strips of reeds, to which is sometimes added wool in varying quantities. The lining is of fine dry grass, reed flowers, and occasionally a little wool or horsehair. Some nests are composed almost entirely of sheep's wool.

**Eggs.**—Usually 4, less frequently 5. Dull greenish white, generally thickly marbled and spotted with olive and grey. There are sometimes a few black markings. *Size.* About  $.67 \times .52$  inches. *Time.* May to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Somewhat laboured, commencing with a phrase sounding something like *kara, kara, keet, keet*. A mixture of harsh and sweet notes, and not so loud or rapid as that of the Sedge-Warbler. *Call.* A harsh *turr* or *choh, choh*.

## MARSH-WARBLER

*Acrocephalus palustris*

**Description.**—*Male.* Very closely resembles the Reed-Warbler, but is rather more olive, slightly paler, and the rump is less rufous. Length, about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Very similar to adults, but more rufous on under parts than young Reed-Warblers usually are.

### Distribution.—

A summer visitor. Apparently rare and local, but distribution still imperfectly known. Nests regularly in Gloucestershire, Somersetshire and Oxfordshire, and in some numbers in Worcestershire. It has bred also in about a dozen other English counties, chiefly, however, in the south and midlands.



Marsh Warbler

**Habits.**—The Marsh-Warbler seldom arrives before late May or early June. It frequents osier-beds, marshes, the edges of ponds and streams, wet ditches, or even bean and corn-fields. Swampy or moist ground is usually preferred, rather than the very wet localities chosen by the Reed-Warbler. The song is undoubtedly one of the most marked characteristics, and one of the best means of distinguishing the species from its commoner relative. The Cuckoo has been known to make use of this Warbler as a foster-parent.

**Food.**—Various insects, especially those found in marshy spots.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Low down, well concealed, and attached to willow-herb, osiers, meadowsweet, cow-parsnip

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

or other plants. *Materials.* Dry grass stems, with sometimes a little moss or a few dead leaves intermixed, lined with fine dry grass, roots and a few horsehairs. The stalks of the plants do not pass through the edge of the nest, but are encircled by a loop of the building materials, which has been compared to a basket handle. The nest is generally more shallow than that of the Reed-Warbler, and it has been stated that it is never placed over water.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Greenish or bluish white, rather boldly blotched and spotted with olive and violet-grey, with occasionally a few black spots. The ground-colour is usually paler and the markings less numerous than in eggs of the Reed-Warbler. *Size.* About .74 × .53 inches. *Time.* June and July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Far more melodious and varied than that of the preceding bird, and the species under notice is an almost unrivalled mimic, introducing into its song a great variety of other birds' notes. Other notes very like those of Reed-Warbler.

### SEDGE-WARBLER

*Acrocephalus schænobænus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper surface reddish brown, more rufous on the rump; the crown and back streaked with black. There is a conspicuous buff eye-stripe, bounded by a black line. Wings blackish brown, margined with lighter brown. Tail feathers dark brown, with paler edges. Under parts buff, with a darker tinge on the flanks and under tail-coverts. Bill and irides dark brown; legs light brown. Length, about 5 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* More rufous, the sides of the neck and fore-breast faintly spotted with brown.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and passage-migrant. Generally distributed in suitable localities throughout the

## SEDGE-WARBLER

British Isles, except in the north of Scotland, where it is less common, and in the north-west, where it becomes very scarce.

**Habits.**—The first Sedge-Warblers usually arrive about the middle of April, the spring movement extending to nearly the end of May, the later migrants possibly being birds of passage on their way to northern breeding grounds beyond the British Isles. The return migration occurs mainly during the first half of August, but continues to the end of September, although the later birds are probably passage-migrants which have not nested with us. This Warbler is found breeding on marshes, by the sides of ponds, lakes, rivers and streams, or even in hedgerows growing in very moist situations. The bird loves dense cover, and although consequently often hidden from view, its chattering song, heard at all hours of the day and night, reveals its presence to every passer-by. The Sedge-Warbler is often selected as a fosterer by the Cuckoo.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvae, especially the aquatic species.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually placed near the ground, but sometimes four or five feet above it, and built amongst thick sedges, long grass, or other rank vegetation. Occasionally in bushes or more rarely in tall rough hedgerows. *Materials.* Grass, bents, moss, and sometimes willow-down, lined with hair or flowering grasses.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Pale yellowish or umber-brown, sometimes suffused or mottled with darker brown, and often streaked



Sedge-Warbler

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at the larger end with a few black hair-like lines. *Size.* About .67 x .52 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A rapid chattering performance into which the bird introduces the notes of a variety of other species. *Alarm note.* A harsh *churr* or *pit, pit.*

### BARRED WARBLER

*Sylvia nisoria*

**Description.**—*Male.* Ashy grey on upper parts, the wings brownish grey, with white tips to the inner secondaries. Lower part of back faintly barred with brown and white. The greyish white under parts are distinctly barred with brownish grey; flanks and under tail-coverts brownish. Bill blackish; legs bluish grey; irides yellow. Length, about 6 inches. *Female.* Less distinctly barred and more brownish.

**Distribution.**—A fairly regular bird of passage, most frequently seen in autumn. It occurs in small numbers along the east coast and in the Northern Isles. Elsewhere of very rare occurrence, but has been noticed in Ireland and also in Wales.

### GARDEN-WARBLER

*Sylvia borin*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts light olive-brown, rather darker on the wings and tail, the primaries having whitish tips. Sides of head slightly greyish. Throat, fore-breast and flanks buff; rest of under parts greyish white. Bill and legs dark brown; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Fore-breast and flanks more yellowish; throat and under tail-coverts buff. In other respects they closely resemble the adult.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and passage-migrant

## GARDEN-WARBLER

Generally distributed in England and Wales, but somewhat local, especially in the extreme west. In Scotland it is common in the Forth and Clyde areas, more local in the Solway district, and numerous in south Perthshire, north of which it has not been known to nest, except in Ross, where it bred in 1919. Occurs on passage in the Northern and less frequently in the Western Isles. Nests very locally in Ireland, but is absent from most districts.

**Habits.**—The Garden-Warbler arrives rather later than the Blackcap, not often appearing before the middle of April, the greatest influx occurring about the second and third weeks of May. The return migration is undertaken during September. Although frequenting gardens providing sufficient cover, this bird is by no means confined to such situations as its name suggests, being a lover of woodlands affording plenty of dense undergrowth, the more wooded portions of commons, dense thickets, and other situations where the trees or bushes are thick enough to furnish concealment, for the Garden-Warbler is more skulking in its habits than its near relative the Blackcap.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the species next described.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In very similar places to those selected by the Blackcap. *Materials.* Dry grasses, lined with finer grass and hair. Sometimes a little wool is used. Usually built rather nearer the ground than the Blackcap's nest, but sometimes placed fairly high up.



Garden-Warbler

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Closely resemble those of Blackcap, but the underlying markings are generally more pronounced and the surface markings lighter. Very careful identification is necessary. *Size* About .77 x .6 inches. *Time*. Mid-May and June.

**Notes.**—*Song*. A rather subdued warble of greater length than the Blackcap's song, and lacking the clear liquid notes *Alarm notes*. *Teck-teck*.

### BLACKCAP

*Sylvia atricapilla*

**Description.**—*Male*. General colouring above olive-grey, darker on the wings and tail. Sides of head and hind-neck ash-grey; crown black. Under parts ash-grey, paler on

the throat and abdomen. Bill dark brown; legs lead-grey; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches. *Female*. The cap is rufous-brown, and the general colouring more brownish. *Young*. Closely resemble the female.

**Distribution.**—Summer resident and a bird of passage. Occasionally, it remains throughout the



Blackcap

winter. Fairly well distributed in England and Wales, but somewhat local. Rarer in Scotland, having seldom been recorded as nesting north of the Forth, Clyde and Tay areas.

## **BLACKCAP**

In Ireland it is scarce, but breeds in many widely separated localities.

**Habits.**—In the south this migrant often arrives at the end of March or early in April, but it is not generally distributed until about the middle of the latter month. The return movement takes place in September, but birds of passage have been noticed until late October. The Blackcap frequents the more open parts or edges of woods overgrown with brambles and other trailing plants, gardens, shrubberies, coppices, thickets, lanes and orchards. Although its habits, nest, eggs and song all bear a resemblance to those of the Garden-Warbler, this species may readily be distinguished by the black crown of the male and chestnut cap of the female. In some districts the Blackcap outnumbers the Garden-Warbler, while in other localities the position is reversed.

**Food.**—Chiefly formed of insects, but the bird is partial to fruit and berries. Migrants passing in September or early October feed largely upon elderberries, large numbers of birds sometimes congregating in thickets where the fruit is abundant.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually built from two to twelve feet above the ground in brambles, briers, nettles, gooseberry bushes, evergreens, or thick hedges. *Materials.* Fibrous roots and dead grasses, with sometimes a little wool. The lining consists of fine bents and horsehair. A flimsy structure, often rather loosely attached to surrounding stems.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Greyish or yellowish white, spotted, blotched and marbled with yellowish brown or deep reddish brown. Some eggs have a salmon-pink ground, spotted with reddish brown or pinkish red. *Size.* About  $.78 \times .58$  inches. *Time.* May, June, and sometimes July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A clear liquid warble, sometimes preceded by a few harsh notes. More varied than that of the

Garden-Warbler. *Alarm or call.* *Tack-tack, or teck-teck*. The bird also has a scolding note not unlike the White-throat's.

## COMMON WHITETHROAT

*Sylvia communis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper surface reddish brown, except the ashy grey head and neck. Wings greyish brown; tail dull brown, edged with dirty white. Chin and throat white; under parts greyish white, tinged with pinkish on the breast.



Common Whitethroats

Bill brown; legs flesh-colour; irides yellowish. Length about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Female.* Colours less pronounced, the grey on the head and neck and the rosy tint on the breast being absent. *Young.* Very like the adults, but darker brown above, and duller on the under parts.

**Distribution.** — Summer visitor, also a passage-migrant. Numerous and generally dispersed except in Scotland, where it is common in the south and central portions, but local and more irregularly distributed in the north.

north. Has been noticed on passage in the Northern Isles fairly regularly, and it is rather a rare passage-migrant in the Outer Hebrides, where it has occasionally nested. Breeds in the Inner Hebrides, and is not uncommon.

**Habits.**—About mid-April the Common Whitethroat usually appears on the south coast in some numbers, th-

## LESSER WHITETHROAT

migratory movement lasting until late in May. In Scotland and Ireland it does not often arrive before early May. The return movement begins about the end of July, and few breeding birds remain after mid-September, those seen later probably being birds of passage from Northern Europe. The Whitethroat is often extremely numerous on gorse-clad commons, in thickets of maythorn or bramble, along roadside and other hedgerows where a thick growth of tall tangled weeds affords a sufficiency of cover. It does not despise the more open parts of woods, where bramble and other creeping plants abound. On being approached this little bird invariably scolds harshly, breaking forth into a joyous burst of song immediately the intruder withdraws, and this habit can hardly fail to attract the attention of the least observant.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, and in autumn soft fruits.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Near the ground or almost upon it, amongst coarse vegetation, in small bushes such as hawthorn, gorse or bramble, and in nettles or heather. Generally well concealed. *Materials.* Coarse grass, bents and rootlets, lined with horsehair. Usually a flimsy structure.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Greenish white, spotted and speckled with greenish brown and lead-grey, the markings often thickly congregated at the larger end in the form of a zone. *Size.* About  $.72 \times .55$  inches. *Time.* May to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A rather hurried performance, containing many sweet notes, and delivered with great vehemence. Often sings on the wing. *Other notes.* A harsh *chaa* or *purr*.

## LESSER WHITETHROAT

*Sylvia curruca*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts greyish brown, except the head, which is slate-grey. Wings and tail brownish grey, the latter margined with white. Under parts whitish, purest on the throat; flanks buffish brown. Ear-coverts

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dark greyish brown. Bill dark brown ; legs leaden grey ; irides light brown. Length, about 5 inches. *Serves alike.*  
**Young.** Bear a close resemblance to the adult bird.

The dark ear-coverts, more greyish brown appearance, and slightly smaller size, distinguish the Lesser Whitethroat from the last described bird.



**Lesser Whitethroat**

**Distribution.**—  
Summer visitor and a passage-migrant. Generally distributed in most parts of England, but less numerous than the Common Whitethroat. It has only once been known to breed in Cornwall, and is local in some of the northern coun-

ties. Rare or absent in the extreme west of Wales, but tolerably well distributed elsewhere. Has nested in Scotland in more than one locality during recent years, but is chiefly known there only as a passage-migrant. A rare wanderer to Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Lesser Whitethroat arrives a little later than the common species, seldom being seen before about the third week of April, the main arrival occurring early in May. The return movement is undertaken from August to about the middle of September, although the bird has been recorded in October. In its choice of a haunt this bird more closely resembles the Garden-Warbler than the Common Whitethroat. The more open country it usually avoids, being found on the fringes of woods, in tangled thickets, along

## DARTFORD WARBLER

dense hedgerows, and on commons well overgrown with bramble, gorse and other bushes, and is more often seen amongst trees than its commoner relative. In late summer, when some local movement is apparent, many Lesser Whitethroats visit both town and country gardens, and this habit is noticeable in spring to a lesser extent.

**Food.**—Mainly composed of insects, but soft fruit is also eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Built in gorse, briars, bramble, thorn and other bushes, also in nettles. Generally placed at a greater height from the ground than the Common Whitethroat's nest. *Materials.* Very similar to those employed by the preceding species. The structure is usually smaller.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. White, creamy white or very pale greenish white, spotted and speckled with ash-grey and olive-brown. The markings often form a belt round the larger end. *Size.* About '66 x '52 inches. *Time.* May to July. Distinguished from eggs of Common Whitethroat by their small size, clear ground, and bolder markings.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Usually commences with a sharp *sip, sip, sip*, followed by a subdued warble, and is quite unlike the Common Whitethroat's, and not so often uttered on the wing. *Call notes.* *Tic-tic.*

## DARTFORD WARBLER

*Sylvia undata*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts chocolate-brown, except the head, which is dark grey. Wings blackish brown, with paler edges to the secondaries. Tail dark brown, the outer feathers margined and tipped with greyish white. Under parts rich chestnut, except the belly, which is dirty white. Bill blackish; legs pale brown; irides varying from light to dark red. Length, about 5 inches, the tail being exceptionally long, and fan-shaped when expanded. *Female.* Paler

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

brown above, and pale chestnut on the throat and breast. *Young.* Yellowish brown on the under parts; irides reddish brown. Otherwise resemble the female.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Very local. Most numerous in Hampshire, nesting also in Surrey, where it has decreased recently almost to the point of extermination, and in Dorset, Sussex, and the Isle of Wight. Breeds in small numbers in Cornwall and East Suffolk. Has been recorded as breeding fairly regularly in very small numbers in Shropshire. A rare straggler to other counties in the southern half of England, with the exception of Berks, Wilts, Essex and Oxon, in which counties it possibly nests.



Photo : Howard Bentham

Dartford Warbler

**Habits.**—This Warbler is non-migratory, and indeed appears to wander but little

from its nesting haunts in the south of England, where it is almost entirely confined to gorse and heather-covered commons. During severe winters Dartford Warblers are greatly reduced in numbers, and they often suffer considerably from extensive heath fires. The bird is not particularly shy, although fond of skulking in thick cover, appearing on the tops of gorse bushes or long heather for very brief periods, induced to reveal its presence by curiosity, or alarm for the safety of its eggs or young. The bird frequently carries the tail almost at right angles to the body, especially if alarmed, when it also erects the head feathers so as to form a crest. The Dartford Warbler is frequently double-brooded, and young may be found in the nest as late as August.

## FIELDFARE

**Food.**—Insects and their larvae. Fruit and soft berries are said to be consumed in autumn.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Placed near the ground in gorse or long thick heather, or amongst a mixture of both plants. Usually smaller and more neatly constructed than that of the Common Whitethroat. *Materials.* Dry grass, small furze shoots, ling, moss and wool. The lining is made of fine dry grass and sometimes a little horsehair.

**Eggs.**—3 to 5. These closely resemble those of the Common Whitethroat. *Size.* About .68 x .5 inches. *Time.* April to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A soft pleasant warble, sometimes uttered on the wing, but more often from the top of a gorse bush or bunch of heather. *Other notes.* Chaa or chee-dee-dee. Sometimes pet-it-chou.

## FIELDFARE

*Turdus pilaris*

**Description.**—*Male.* In winter the head, hind-neck and rump are light slate-grey, the crown slightly streaked with black. Back chestnut brown, wings and tail dark brown. Throat, fore-breast and flanks deep buff, streaked with blackish brown; lower breast and abdomen white. Bill dark brown, yellowish on the under mandible. Legs and irides brown. Length, about 10 inches. *Sexes alike.*

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor and passage-migrant. Common and generally distributed, but varying in numbers from year to year.

**Habits.**—Fieldfares begin to arrive about mid-September, but are by no means abundant until well into October. The return migration commences in March, although many birds do not leave until April, and occasionally a few remain until May or even early June. The haunts of this species are very similar to those selected by the Redwing, but it is

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

often more abundant on the higher ground than its congener. Although perhaps not so evenly distributed as the Redwing, the flocks of Fieldfares are often larger, especially in the north

of England. The Fieldfare is by no means shy at its breeding haunts in Northern Europe, but is usually a somewhat wary bird as a winter visitor to the British Isles, except in very severe weather. If alarmed while on their feeding grounds the birds rise hurriedly, seldom failing to utter their harsh notes as



*Photo : Howard Bentham*

### Fieldfare

they seek the safety afforded by some tall, leafless tree, from which they will only descend when the disturbance is past.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the Redwing. In severe weather turnips and other root crops are attacked.

**Notes.**—A rapid *thack, thack, thack*. In mild weather a low but not unmusical warble may sometimes be heard.

## MISTLE-THRUSH

*Turdus viscivorus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts greyish olive-brown, darker on the wings and tail, the latter edged with white; upper wing-coverts broadly edged at tips with dirty white; primaries margined with white and the secondaries show narrow white tips. Under surface buff, except the chin, throat and cheeks, which are buffish white. Chin, throat and fore-breast marked with arrow-shaped, and the remainder

## MISTLE-THRUSH

of under parts with fan-shaped spots of blackish brown. Bill and irides deep brown; legs pale brown. Length, about 11 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* More yellowish above, the head, back, wings and upper wing-coverts spotted with buffish white. Distinguished from Song-Thrush by its larger size, greyer upper parts and white tail margins.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Generally distributed except in treeless districts, where it is rare or much more thinly dispersed. Many birds leave our shores in autumn.

**Habits.**—The Mistle or Missel-Thrush, or Stormcock, is commonly found in wooded country, but is by no means confined to the woods, being quite numerous wherever tall trees abound, and also frequents some treeless districts. It delights to pour forth its wild clear notes during stormy spring and winter days, its song not infrequently brightening the closing months of the year. Under favourable weather conditions the Mistle-Thrush is in finest song in March and early April, but as spring advances the bird's vocal powers gradually decline, and usually cease early in June. In defence of its nest or young, the Stormcock displays great courage, and will fearlessly assault birds much its superior in size, uttering harsh chattering cries as it pursues any winged enemy that has ventured too near its home. In autumn and winter this species



Mistle-Thrush

is gregarious, congregating in small and occasionally large flocks, which wander over the countryside in search of suitable feeding grounds.

**Food.**—Worms, snails, insects, fruit, berries.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally in the fork of a tree or close to the trunk, usually at a fair height, but sometimes quite low down. Found in woods, parks, large gardens, orchards, plantations, and in treeless districts less frequently, where it is placed in bushes or in stone walls. *Materials.* Small twigs, coarse grass, bents, wool, moss, lichens, solidified with mud and lined with fine dry grass.

**Eggs.**—4, more rarely 5. Greyish green or reddish grey, blotched and spotted with reddish brown and greyish violet.

*Size.* About 1·3 x ·88 inches. *Time.* February to June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Loud and clear, composed of several broken strains, more hurried and less mellow than the Blackbird's song. *Alarm.* A harsh rattling cry.

## SONG-THRUSH

*Turdus philomelus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts light olive-brown, the wing-quills edged with a lighter shade. Fore-breast and sides of neck rich buff; throat, lower breast and abdomen whitish. Under surface marked with fan-shaped black spots; flanks streaked with black. Bill dusky; legs pale brown; irides hazel. Length, about 9 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Mottled above with buff. Flanks spotted with black, whereas these are streaked in the adult.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Common and generally distributed almost throughout the British Isles. Many birds leave our shores in autumn.

**Habits.**—The Song-Thrush frequents almost the same localities as the Blackbird, and in its habits does not differ much from that species. As a songster this bird is one of the

## SONG-THRUSH

most persistent of the Thrush family, and its cheerful notes may be heard in almost every month of the year, whereas the song-period of the Blackbird is much more limited. It is also a mimic of no mean ability, and will exactly reproduce the clear whistle of the Redshank, the call and alarm notes of the Curlew, the cry of the Little Owl, and other bird notes. At the nest the Song-Thrush is most demonstrative, especially after the young are hatched, when it will flutter excitedly round the intruder, uttering its harsh chattering alarm cry, and frequently it will follow the offender quite a considerable distance from the nest, on protest bent.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the Blackbird. The Song-Thrush is, however, not so partial to fruit.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Built in very similar places to those chosen by the Blackbird. Occasionally on level ground amongst bramble or other plants, or in a thick tuft of coarse grass. *Materials.* Dry grass, moss, dead bracken, small twigs, and occasionally wool or leaves. The lining is made of mud or cow-dung, with which is often mixed small pieces of decayed wood or chips of straw.

**Eggs.**—4 or 5, rarely 6. Deep greenish blue, spotted with black and sometimes also with pale purplish brown. The markings often form a belt round the larger end, but in many specimens are fairly evenly distributed over the



Song-Thrush

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

entire surface. Unspotted eggs are by no means a rarity, and occasionally the whole clutch is without markings. **Size.** About 1·05 × ·8 inches. **Time.** February to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* This is characteristic, inasmuch as each note is usually repeated three or four times in succession. The notes are varied and differ considerably in individual birds. *Other notes.* *Sik, tsak,* or a screaming chatter when much alarmed.

### REDWING

*Turdus musicus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts olive-brown. A broad buff stripe extends over the eye to the nape. Throat white; breast whitish, tinged with buff on the fore-part; flanks

, and under wing-coverts chestnut-red. The whole of the under parts more or less conspicuously streaked with black. Bill and irides dark brown; legs pale brown. *Sexes alike.* Length, about 8 inches. Easily distinguished from Song-Thrush by the eye-stripe and rusty red

FLANKS.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor of general distribution. Birds also occur as passage-migrants in spring and autumn.

**Habits.**—The Redwing usually arrives late in September or in early October, although in some parts it is not abundant until late October. The return movement commences as early as February, the majority of birds leaving in March.

Redwing

## RING-OUZEL

although many remain until April, a few lingering even until May. Migratory movements often take place at night, when passing flocks may easily be detected, the call being frequently uttered during these nocturnal flights. The Redwing frequents almost any kind of open country, and is decidedly gregarious, the flocks sometimes being of considerable size, although subject to fluctuation, a period of severe weather often accounting for a great increase in numbers. It often associates with Fieldfares, but is not quite so often found on high ground.

**Food.**—Worms, snails, insects and berries. In hard weather it will feed ravenously on the last named, being then very partial to the fruit of the holly and whitethorn.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Frequently heard in the British Isles, especially during the prevalence of mild or bright weather. Birds usually sing in chorus. The notes are a confused chattering warble. *Call.* A soft *si-ou*. *Alarm.* Took, or occasionally a chatter very like that of the Song-Thrush.

## RING-OUZEL

*Turdus torquatus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts black, slightly tinged with brown, the feathers margined with grey, especially on the wings. Under parts blackish brown, with grey edgings to the feathers. There is a broad crescent of white across the breast. Bill and legs brownish black, the former yellowish at the base; irides hazel. Length, about 11 inches. *Female.* Browner and greyer, and the narrower breast band is tinged with brown. *Young.* More or less mottled with dark brown and black, and lack the white crescent on the breast.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and a passage-migrant. Breeds regularly in the higher districts of Devon, Cornwall and Somerset, in Wales and on the Welsh border, also in

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

many parts of the north of England and sparingly in the Isle of Man. In Scotland it is pretty general in the moorland and mountainous districts, and in Ireland is thinly distributed on the mountains in all four provinces.



**Ring-Ouzel (Female)**

**Habits.**—The Ring-Ouzel appears on our south coasts by the middle of March, and the return movement commences in September, but many birds remain until late October, and occasionally a few stay throughout the winter. The summer home of this Thrush is on the moorlands, mountains or wilder hills, but during the spring and autumn migration it may be met

with in most parts of the country, but shows a preference for the wilder districts. Passage-migrants continue to pass through the British Isles on their way to more northern breeding grounds long after our nesting birds have settled in their summer quarters.

**Food.**—Worms, snails, slugs, insects and berries. Passing autumn migrants feed largely upon elderberries.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Built amongst heather on banks, upon ledges of rock, in holes in stone walls, barns or lime-kilns, and occasionally on the ground or in a low bush. *Materials.* Roots, coarse grasses, small twigs or bits of heather, moss and mud. Lined with fine dry grass.

**Eggs.**—4 or 5, rarely 6. In coloration they closely resemble those of the Blackbird, but are as a rule more bluish in ground

## **BLACKBIRD**

colour, with larger spots, although some types are quite indistinguishable from those of the commoner bird. *Size.* About 1·2 × ·84 inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A few strong clear notes, more like those of the Mistle-Thrush than the Blackbird, and usually delivered from a rock, low wall or heather clump. *Alarm cry.* A hasty *tac, tac, tac.*

## **BLACKBIRD**

*Turdus merula*

**Description.**—*Male.* Plumage uniform black. Bill orange-yellow; legs blackish brown; irides dark brown. Length, about 10 inches. *Female.* Dark rusty brown, paler on the throat and breast, which are streaked with black. Bill and legs dusky brown. *Young.* Resemble the female, but are more reddish brown and the feathers have pale shaft streaks.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Generally distributed except in the Outer Hebrides and Shetlands, where it breeds locally in both groups, and in the Inner Hebrides and Orkneys, where it is somewhat more common.

**Habits.**—The Blackbird is a familiar bird in our parks and gardens, while in woods, along hedgerows and on commons and hill-sides overgrown with bushes it is always a numerous species. In winter it appears to be more abundant than the Song-Thrush, which is no doubt due to the fact



Blackbird (Female)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

that large numbers of the latter bird leave our shores in autumn, whereas the Blackbird appears to be more sedentary. Although this bird cannot be considered a shy species, it is always very much on the alert and will hurry into cover on being disturbed, uttering a harsh series of screaming notes as it seeks the safety of some thick bush or hedgerow. The Blackbird is very noisy when going to roost, a loud *chink, chink, chink* invariably denoting the bird's retirement to some secluded corner in wood, garden or hedgerow. Although a useful bird in the garden, the Blackbird shows a decided fondness for soft fruits, and will also take toll of apples and pears, especially during periods of drought.

**Food.**—Worms, snails, insects, fruit, berries, and occasionally grain.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In evergreens, deciduous bushes and trees, on banks or ledges of rock and in sheds or barns. *Materials.* Coarse grass, moss, stalks, fine twigs, and often strips of paper, solidified with mud and lined with fine dry grass.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Bluish green, sometimes evenly marked all over with small reddish brown spots, although more commonly boldly blotched and spotted with this colour, and showing greyish underlying markings. *Size.* About 1·18 x ·85 inches. *Time.* March to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Mellow and flute-like, ending in a few somewhat harsh notes, but with the exception of the Nightingale, the Blackbird is undoubtedly the most accomplished songster of the various members of the Thrush family found in the British Isles. *Other notes.* A metallic *chink*, a rapid *tack, tack, tack*, or a harsh screaming cry.

## WHEATEAR

*Oenanthe oenanthe*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, nape and back pearl-grey, tinged with brown; rump and upper tail-coverts white. Wings nearly black, with pale brown margins to some of the feathers. Basal half of tail white, remainder black. From the base of the bill to the ear-coverts there is a broad black band, and above this one of white. Chin, throat, neck and breast rich buff; flanks paler buff; abdomen white. Bill and legs black; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches. *Female.* Sandy brown on upper parts and more buff below. Generally less conspicuously marked. *Young.* Mottled at first with dusky streaks and buff bars, the quills edged with rufous. Later they closely resemble the adult female.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. Local, but widely distributed. Many birds visit us as passage-migrants.

**Habits.**—The Wheatear often reaches our shores early in March and continues to arrive until about the end of April. The return movement is undertaken in September, although some birds remain until late in October. About the end of April and during May a larger race arrives, known as the Greenland Wheatear, these being strictly birds of passage travelling to northern breeding grounds beyond our shores. Downlands, moors, open parts of commons, rough



Photo. Howard Benthem

Wheatear (Male)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

hill-pastures, rocky or sandy coastal regions and mountains up to 3,000 feet in height are the chosen breeding places of the Wheatear. During the migration periods in spring and autumn it is of more general distribution, being then found in almost any type of rough open country.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects, also small worms and molluscs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In rabbit-burrows, holes under rocks, old lime-kilns, peat stacks, under heaps of old bricks or in cavities in stone walls. *Materials.* Dead grass, rootlets, moss, lined with rabbit's fur, wool, hair or feathers. Usually well concealed, but sometimes visible from the entrance hole.

**Eggs.**—5 or 6, occasionally 7. Pale greenish blue, rarely showing a few rusty specks. *Size.* About .83 × .61 inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Short and pleasing, somewhat resembling the notes of the Stonechat and Whinchat, but more varied. Often uttered on the wing. *Call.* Chick, chack, chack.

### WHINCHAT

*Saxicola rubetra*

**Description.**—*Male.* Yellowish brown above, relieved by broad black streaks. Cheeks and ear-coverts black, a rather broad white streak extending from the base of the upper mandible over the eye. A white line runs from the chin to the sides of the neck. Wings dark brown, with two white patches. Basal half of tail white, lower portion dark brown, edged with paler brown. Chin white; throat and breast rufous; belly dull white. Bill and legs black; irides brown. Length, about 5½ inches. *Female.* Paler, with less distinct white parts. *Young.* Closely resemble adult female, but the breast is spotted with brown.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. Somewhat local, but widely distributed and quite numerous in some districts.

## WHINCHAT

**Habits.**—The Whinchat arrives during the latter half of April in the south, but two or three weeks later in the extreme north. The return migration extends from August to the end of September. A good deal of local movement is noticeable almost directly after the duties of rearing a family have been concluded. Gorse and heather-covered commons, rough pasture-lands, marshes and tracts of bracken-clothed ground are the chief haunts of the Whinchat in the breeding season, and in some parts of the country it is very partial to railway embankments and cuttings. Where the bird is numerous, numbers of nests may be found within quite a limited area, but each pair keep to their own particular territory. The nest is not an easy one to discover, but the male's habit of perching near his brooding mate is often a guide to its whereabouts. The Whinchat is single brooded.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects, occasionally small worms, and even growing corn.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst gorse, heather, bracken or long grass, and frequently sheltered by a small bush or young tree. *Materials.* Coarse dry grass, fibrous roots and a little moss, lined with fine dry grass and hair. Rather loosely put together.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Beautiful greenish blue, often but not



Photo : Howard Bentham

Whinchat (Male)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

invariably marked faintly with rusty brown, the spots sometimes taking the form of a zone round the broader end.  
**Size.** About .76 x .57 inches. **Time.** May and June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A short and rather rapid warble. *Other notes*, a soft *peep*, or *wheet-tick, tick*.

### STONECHAT

*Saxicola torquata*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and throat velvety black; back dull black, the feathers fringed with brown; upper tail-coverts white. The sides of neck are white, forming a broad collar. Wings brown, a white patch on the secondaries being very noticeable. Tail blackish; under parts rich chestnut, except the abdomen, which is buff. Bill and legs black; irides brown. Length, about 5 inches. *Female.* Much browner, the white parts are less distinct and the throat is merely mottled with black. The absence of the eye-stripe and the fact that there is no white on the tail distinguish the hen from the female Whinchat. *Young.* Resemble the female, but are spotted and streaked on both upper and under parts.



Photo : Howard Bentham

Stonechat (Male)

female, but are spotted and streaked on both upper and under parts.

**Distribution.**—Resident and a passage-migrant. Local, but widely distributed, being particularly numerous in many coastal areas.

**Habits.**—The Stonechat is only a partial resident in the

## STONECHAT

British Isles, some birds undoubtedly leaving our shores in autumn, while others forsake their summer haunts at this season, possibly for more southern localities in England. In some of the south-western counties of England it is possibly stationary throughout the year. In the choice of a haunt this bird does not differ greatly from the preceding species, although it is perhaps more partial to moorland country and rough boulder-strewn ground. Breeding usually commences quite early in the year, many nests containing the full complement of eggs by mid-April, and exceptionally incubation begins during the last week of March. Two broods are usually reared in a season, and old and young birds remain together for some time after the latter have vacated the nest, this being especially noticeable in the case of second broods.

**Food.**—Flies, moths, butterflies, dragonflies and other insects. In winter seeds are also eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Upon the ground, and usually artfully concealed at the base of a gorse bush, or amongst heather, dead bracken or tangled grass. *Materials.* Moss, bents and dry grass. The lining is formed of fine bents and horse-hair, with occasionally a little fur or wool, or a few feathers.

**Eggs.**—5 or 6. Rarely 7. Pale bluish green, finely spotted with pale reddish brown. *Size.* About .7 × .57 inches. *Time.* March to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Short and rapid, containing a few very sweet notes, and not unlike the warble of the Hedge-Sparrow. Usually delivered from the top of a bush or small tree, but at other times as the bird hovers in the air. *Call.* Weet-tack, tack, or tsack, tsack.

## COMMON REDSTART

*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead white, black at base of bill. Crown, neck and mantle bluish grey, rest of upper parts bright chestnut, except the two central tail feathers, which are brownish. Wings dark brown. Throat, cheeks and sides of neck black. Under parts chestnut, paler on the abdomen. Bill black; irides and legs dark brown. Length, about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Female.* Lacks the black and white on the head. Upper parts greyish brown; tail duller and under parts paler than in male. *Young.* Not unlike the female, but mottled on both upper and under parts.



Common Redstart (Male)

**Distribution.**—Summer resident and a bird of passage. Local, but widely distributed, being rare as a breeding bird in the extreme

south-west of England and the extreme north of Scotland, but occurs frequently in the Northern Isles in spring and autumn. Breeds in Mull, but apparently not elsewhere in the Inner Hebrides. Rare passage-migrant to Outer Hebrides. A very scarce migrant to Irish coasts, and it is doubtful whether it now breeds in the Emerald Isle.

**Habits.**—The Redstart arrives about mid-April, or rather earlier in the south, not reaching the northern counties until the end of that month. The return movement commences at the end of July, or even earlier, and lasts until September. It is probable that many birds seen outside the breeding areas in July or early August are merely

## COMMON REDSTART

engaging in local movements. During the nesting season the Redstart frequents woods and parks, especially those in which much of the timber is old and decayed. It is also found around dwellings in the more rural districts where trees abound. In late summer and in autumn, as well as during the spring migration, this bird may often be seen in more open country, where it is sometimes quite numerous in thickets of thorn-bushes on commons, or in sheltered downland valleys. To such localities it will resort year after year with the greatest regularity. A curious quivering motion of the tail is characteristic of this species and the Black Redstart.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects and their larvae, also worms and berries.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In holes in walls, banks or trees, in outhouses or in crannies amongst rocks. Usually in a more or less wooded locality. *Materials.* Dead grass, leaves, rootlets and moss, lined with hair and feathers.

**Eggs.**—5 to 7, rarely 8. Pale bluish green. *Size.* About .75 x .54 inches. *Time.* May to July. The situation of the nest prevents confusion with eggs of the Hedge-Sparrow, but as the Pied Flycatcher often selects a very similar nesting place, care should be exercised in the identification.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A short but very sweet melody. *Call.* *Wheel-tit-tit* or *wheet*. The single note closely resembles the Willow Wren's call, but is a trifle louder.

## BLACK REDSTART

*Phoenicurus ochrurus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck, back and rump dark slate-grey. Tail chestnut. Throat and breast sooty black; belly and flanks buff. Wings dark brown, with a conspicuous white patch. Bill and legs black; irides brown. Length about 5½ inches. *Female.* Duller, the parts which are black in the male being smoky brown. The general sooty appearance and white wing patches are distinctive in the male, and the hen is distinguished from the female Common Redstart by the uniform mouse-colour of the under parts.

**Distribution.**—Regular passage-migrant and winter visitor, generally in very small numbers, chiefly along south and east coasts of England, and on parts of North Wales coast. Elsewhere much less frequent. Mr. T. A. Coward has recorded the nesting of this species on the south coast of England in 1923 and 1924.

**Habits.**—The Black Redstart normally arrives from early October to late November, returning in March or April. Although usually found close to the sea during the winter months, when migrating, this species may be met with in gardens or on hill-sides far from the coast. In its actions this Redstart is very robin-like, and is fond of searching newly turned ground, over which it hops rapidly. It will at times capture winged insects in the air.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, worms and small crustaceans.

**Notes.**—*Call.* Wheet-*tk.*

## NIGHTINGALE

*Luscinia megarhyncha*

**Description.**—*Male.* Whole of upper parts russet-brown, shading to pale chestnut on the upper tail-coverts and tail. Throat white; fore-breast and flanks greyish, tinged with brown; lower breast and belly white; under tail-coverts

## NIGHTINGALE

buff. Bill and legs brown; irides hazel. Length, about 6 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. More rufous above, relieved by buff spots. Tail more reddish than in the adult; throat and fore-breast barred with blackish.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. Fairly generally distributed and quite numerous in many suitable localities south and east of a line drawn from the Wash to the Severn. It is, however, absent from Cornwall and parts of Somerset, and very local in Devon. North and west of the above mentioned line very much scarcer, not breeding north of Yorkshire. Unknown in Ireland, and there is only a single record of its occurrence in Scotland.

**Habits.**—The Nightingale arrives in some numbers about mid-April, although stragglers appear somewhat earlier. The spring movement sometimes lasts into May, and the return migration extends from about the middle of August to mid-September. Although chiefly an inhabitant of extensively wooded areas, this bird is not entirely confined to such localities, small plantations, commons overgrown with bushes, quiet gardens, shady copses, and even wide unkept hedgerows affording suitable nesting places for many pairs. It is common knowledge that the Nightingale is one of our finest songsters, but there is, however, quite a widespread belief that the bird sings only at night, yet such is by no means the case, the notes being heard quite as frequently during the day. The song-period is remarkably short,



Nightingale

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

usually extending from mid-April until the early part of June.

**Food.**—Worms, insects and berries.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Close to or upon the ground, usually well concealed by weeds, nettles or bramble, or amongst exposed roots in hedgerow bottoms. Sometimes placed at the foot of a sapling tree, or even in gorse bushes or amongst rushes. Often built quite close to a roadway or woodland path. *Materials.* Dead leaves, dry grass, moss, fibrous roots. The lining is made of fine dry grass and horsehair.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6, usually 5. Uniform olive-brown or olive-green. Some clutches are finely mottled with brown, the markings tending to form a cap. *Size.* About .85 x .6 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Commences with a soft *pew, pew, pew,* *pew*, the notes rising until they attain so much power that they may be heard at a great distance. Some harsh notes are intermingled amongst the finer phrases, which often end abruptly. *Call.* A soft *wheet*. *Alarm.* A harsh croak.



Red-spotted Bluethroat  
(Female)

### RED - SPOTTED BLUETHROAT

*Luscinia svecica*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts brown, with a whitish stripe above the eye. Throat and breast blue, with a broad chestnut spot. The blue is terminated by bands of black, white and chestnut. Rest of under parts whitish. Tail chestnut from the base to the middle, except the two central feathers, which are brown, as is also the remainder. Bill

## REDBREAST

black; legs and irides brown. Length, about 5 inches.  
*Female.* Brown, with tawny white underparts. There is a dark band across the breast. Tail as in male.

**Distribution.**—Regular autumn passage-migrant from the end of August to mid-October, along the east coast of England, where it probably occurs regularly in spring. In Scotland it is a regular spring and autumn migrant to Fair Isle, and occurs fairly frequently in the Isle of May in autumn.

## REDBREAST

*Erithacus rubecula*

**Description.**—*Male.* Olive-brown above. Forehead, sides of head and neck, lores, throat and upper part of breast orange-red, narrowly margined on sides of neck and breast with blue-grey. Lower breast and abdomen whitish; flanks pale brown. Bill and irides black; the legs brown. Length — about 5½ inches.  
*Sexes alike. Young.* Brown, mottled and streaked with buff, the orange-red of the adults being absent.



Redbreast

**Distribution.**—Resident and a passage-migrant. Numbers of our breeding birds leave us in autumn. Common and generally distributed, but rare in the extreme north of the Scottish mainland, and in the Orkneys and Outer Hebrides. Apparently does not occur in the Shetlands.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Habits.**—The Redbreast, or Robin, is a familiar bird in our parks and gardens, but is equally at home in woods and fields far from habitations. This engaging little songster is a general favourite on account of its fearlessness towards man. During gardening operations it is a close attendant upon the toiler, always displaying the keenest interest in any digging work which may be in progress, knowing well that these activities invariably result in an abundant supply of worms, which form an important item of the bird's diet. Towards members of its own species the Robin is most pugnacious, and combats waged by rival males are frequent as the pairing season approaches. Each pair of Redbreasts as a rule keep to their own particular territory during the breeding season, but exceptionally two or more nests may be found within an extremely limited area.

**Food.**—Worms, insects, small snails, berries, and occasionally seeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Frequently on hedgerow or other banks, less often on level ground. Also in holes in walls, buildings or trees, amongst ivy, in sides of haystacks, inside old tins, kettles, shoes or hats, in outbuildings and a variety of other situations. *Materials.* Dead leaves, grasses, moss and fibrous roots, lined chiefly with hair.

**Eggs.**—5 to 7. White, spotted and freckled with dull sandy red. Sometimes the markings nearly obscure the white, at other times the shell is boldly marked with a few spots, which are often collected chiefly round the larger end. Occasionally unspotted. *Size.* About .8 x .6 inches. *Time.* March to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Too well known to require description. *Call.* A rapid *tit, tit, tit*, also used as a cry of anger. *Alarm.* A long drawn *scee*.

## HEDGE-SPARROW

*Prunella modularis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and nape dull bluish grey, streaked with brown. Back, wings and tail dusky brown, the back streaked with blackish brown. Chin, throat, sides of neck and fore-breast bluish grey; lower breast and belly greyish white. Flanks pale brown, with darker streaks. Bill brown; legs dark orange-brown; irides red-brown. Length, about 5½ inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Browner and more spotted than adults, lacking the grey on the head and under parts.

**Distribution.**—Resident and passage-migrant. Also a winter visitor. Common and generally distributed, except in the extreme north of Scotland, where it is scarce. Rare in the Orkneys and does not breed in the Shetlands. Scarce in Outer Hebrides, except at Stornoway.

**Habits.**—The Hedge-Sparrow, or Hedge-Accentor, is almost as common a bird in our gardens, parks and farm-yards as the more conspicuous and assertive Robin, nevertheless many persons confess their inability to distinguish it from the House-Sparrow. The bluish grey on the head and breast, deeper and more uniform brown of the back, and the slender pointed bill, should, however, prevent confusion. Some of the Hedge-Sparrows which nest with us apparently leave in autumn, and at this season others arrive on the east coast, and the bird is also said to occur as a passage-migrant through the British Isles. Although not so persistent as



Hedge-Sparrow

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

the Song-Thrush or Redbreast, this sober coloured little songster frequently utters its cheerful warble during the winter months, and is not easily silenced by severe weather conditions. In spring and summer it often bursts into song after dark, apparently so doing if disturbed. The curious habit of jerking the wings while searching the ground for food, or during moments of excitement, has earned for the bird the name of "Shuffle-wing." The Hedge-Sparrow is common around habitations, but is also quite numerous in most cultivated districts, as well as on commons, in woods, and in almost any situation affording sufficient cover where-with to conceal the nest. Frequently victimized by Cuckoo.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects and seeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In evergreen or other bushes, in hedge-rows, especially those formed of hawthorn, in nettles, heaps of faggots, on banks or in ivy on walls. Usually about three or four feet from the ground. *Materials.* Moss, dead grass, fine twigs and rootlets, lined with hair, wool and sometimes feathers. Compactly built.

**Eggs.**—4 or 5, rarely 6. Turquoise-blue, without markings.

**Size.** About .77 × .6 inches. **Time.** March to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A cheerful high-pitched warble. *Call.* A piping *seep*.

## COMMON WREN

*Troglodytes troglodytes*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts reddish brown, faintly marked on the back and rump with bars of light and dark brown. Wings and tail barred with light reddish brown and black. A dull whitish line passes above the eye and ear-coverts. Under parts greyish white, tinged with buff and shading to light brown on the sides and belly, which are barred with a darker tint of brown. Bill dark brown; legs pale brown; irides hazel. Length, about 3½ inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Similar to the adult, but less strongly barred.

## COMMON WREN

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor, also a passage-migrant. Common and generally distributed, but replaced in St. Kilda and the Shetland Islands by local forms briefly described below.

**Habits.**—Our breeding Wrens are resident throughout the year, but others reach us from the Continent in autumn, returning in March or April. This little bird is a familiar and numerous species, equally at home around our dwellings and in woods and fields, on commons, moors, hill-sides and other situations far from habitations. When hunting for food along a hedge-bank, amongst ivy or tree-

roots, the Wren's actions are mouse-like, and it will sometimes pause for a few moments in its diligent search to pour forth a joyous burst of vigorous song. The bird indulges in the curious habit of building several spare nests, which may always be distinguished from that intended for the reception of the eggs by the absence of a lining of feathers and hair. The additional structures are known as "cock-nests." The male certainly takes an active part in their construction, but the hen has been observed to assist.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects. In winter seeds are also eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Amongst gnarled roots of trees, between fern roots on banks, in ivy growing on trees or walls, in holes in rocks or walls, amongst accumulated litter in bushes growing near streams, in hay or faggot stacks, amongst



Common Wren

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

the thatch of a barn and various other situations. *Materials.* Moss, dead leaves or bracken, roots, dry grass stalks. The lining is composed of hair and feathers. Spherical in shape, with an opening in the side.

**Eggs.**—5 to 8, occasionally up to 11. White, finely spotted with brownish red of varying shades, especially at the larger end. Sometimes unmarked. *Size.* About .7 × .51 inches. *Time.* April to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* Loud and joyous, commencing with a few clear notes followed by a very rapid trill. *Other notes.* *Tek, ek, ek* and a jarring *chiz-z-z-z*.

The **St. Kilda Wren** (*T. t. hirtensis*) is confined to the group of islands of that name. It is a larger and paler bird, with more distinctly marked plumage, and larger and stronger beak and feet.

The **Shetland Wren** (*T. t. zetlandicus*), confined to the Shetlands, is larger and much darker than the Common Wren.

### DIPPER

*Cinclus cinclus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck sooty brown; back lead-grey, mottled with black; wings and tail brownish black. Throat and upper breast snowy white, lower breast chestnut; flanks dark slate-colour; belly and under tail-coverts black. Bill and legs black; irides dark brown. Length, about 7 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* These have no white or chestnut on the breast, their plumage being a mixture of brown, black and grey, the under parts presenting a mottled appearance.

**Distribution.**—Resident in suitable localities in the north and west of England, and in Wales. On the mainland of Scotland it is generally distributed, but does not breed in the Orkneys and Shetlands, although it does so in some of the

## DIPPER

Outer Hebrides. The bird found in Ireland, which differs slightly in coloration, is resident and generally distributed in all suitable localities.

**Habits.**—The Dipper, or Water-Ouzel, is a bird of rapidly running rocky streams, and in such localities it is often quite abundant, although during the nesting season each pair apparently appropriate a certain length of stream. The Dipper is quite distinctive both in appearance and habits, and cannot readily be confused with any other British bird. The flight is rapid, and the bird turns with marvellous quickness in order to avoid a large boulder or tree branch, or to negotiate a sharp bend in the stream. It both dives and walks into the water when obtaining its food, and when perched on a rock the Dipper has a curious habit of spasmodically bobbing, at the same time uplifting its short tail.

**Food.**—Aquatic insects, spiders and crustaceans.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Placed close to running water, in a hollow in a rock, on a ledge, under a waterfall, beneath a tree root or in the masonry of a bridge. It may either be built on the banks of a stream or on a boulder in mid-stream. Rarely on tree branches overhanging the water, and at some distance above it. *Materials.* Green moss and sometimes dead grass or leaves. The lining consists of layers of dry leaves. Globular or oval in shape.



Dipper

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. White. **Size.** About 1·0 × .75 inches.

**Time.** March to June, occasionally July.

**Notes.**—Song. Sweet and low, and somewhat hurried.

**Call.** Chit, chit.

### SWALLOW

*Hirundo rustica*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts steel-blue, the wings and tail showing a greenish gloss. There are white oval spots on the tail feathers, which are deeply forked, the two outer ones being pointed and much elongated. Forehead,

chin and throat chestnut-red. A broad blue collar extends across the upper breast, the rest of the under parts are buff. Bill and legs black; irides hazel. Length, about 7½ inches. *Female.* Closely resembles the male, but the tail is slightly shorter. *Young.* Much duller, the tail considerably shorter and less pointed.



#### DISTRIBUTION.—

Summer visitor and

passage-migrant. Generally distributed and common in most parts, but becoming scarcer in the north of Scotland, only breeding occasionally in the Orkneys, and very rarely in the Shetlands and Outer Hebrides. In the extreme west of Ireland it nests uncommonly.

**Habits.**—A few Swallows sometimes reach us towards the end of March or early in April, and by the middle of

## SWALLOW

the latter month the bird is fairly numerous in many localities. The time of arrival, however, varies in different parts of the country. About the end of August some birds commence to travel southwards from Scotland and the north of England, but there is no proof that these early wanderers actually leave our shores. In September the southern movement becomes general throughout the country, being at its height in the last two weeks of that month, and by the middle of October the majority of birds have departed overseas, although stragglers remain until mid-November or even later. Although reaching us early, the Swallow does not commence nesting until some weeks after its arrival, full clutches of eggs rarely being deposited even in the south before the middle of May. Two or three broods are reared, the young sometimes not having left the nest in October. Where there is sufficient accommodation a number of nests may be made in one building. The Swallow is not particular in the choice of a nesting place, but is less common in and around towns than its relative the House-Martin, although the more numerous of the two species in rural districts.

**Food.**—Insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the roof-timbers of a cow-shed, barn, stable or outhouse, inside chimneys, and sometimes against a wall inside a building. Occasionally in caves or trees. *Materials.* Mud mixed with dry grass and straws, lined with grass and feathers.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. White, spotted and speckled with red-brown or purplish brown and grey. *Size.* About  $.88 \times .55$  inches. *Time.* May to July, sometimes later.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A simple but pleasing twitter, often followed by a harsh note very difficult to express on paper, and terminating in a sharp kind of chirp. *Call.* *Twheel, twheet,* more rapidly repeated when the bird is alarmed.

## HOUSE-MARTIN

*Delichon urbica*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts dark steel-blue, with the exception of the rump, which is white; wings and tail sooty black, the latter forked, but much less so than that of the Swallow. Under parts pure white, the legs and toes

clothed in short white feathers. Bill black; irides brown. Length, about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Sooty brown on the upper parts. The inner secondaries are tipped with white and some of the primaries edged with white. The House-Martin is very frequently confused with the last described bird, both species being indiscriminately classed as "Swallows."

The two birds, however,

House-Martin

bear very marked characteristics, which have already been described.

**Distribution.**—Summer resident and also a passage-migrant. Generally distributed, but more local than the Swallow. A scarce breeding species in the Orkneys, and only occasionally nests in the Shetlands. A rare vagrant to the Outer Hebrides.

**Habits.**—The House-Martin arrives somewhat later than the Swallow, usually appearing about the middle of April, although a few stragglers sometimes reach us earlier. The bird is seldom generally distributed until late in that month. The return migration is performed in September and October, belated birds being often recorded in November or even

## SAND-MARTIN

December. Very shortly after their arrival House-Martins visit their nesting sites of the previous summer, and if the nest has remained intact, little time is lost in inspecting its condition, although some days may elapse before any necessary repairs are made. Greatly attached to an old haunt, the birds will return each spring to the same nest, or build a fresh one in the original position, should the structure of the previous season have been destroyed. Two or even three broods are reared, but so strong is the migratory impulse in the adult birds, that the very late broods are sometimes left to starve in the nest.

**Food.**—Insects of various kinds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Under the eaves of buildings or attached to projecting slabs of rock on sea or inland cliffs; occasionally on chalk-cliffs or in caves, and sometimes fixed to the masonry or brickwork of a railway bridge. *Materials.* Layers of mud or clay form the walls, which are built right up to the eaves or ledge to which the nest is attached, a small opening being left at the top. The lining is of hay, straw and feathers.

**Eggs.**—4 or 5, rarely 6. White, without gloss. *Size.* About .8 x .52 inches. *Time.* May to September.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A soft twittering warble. *Call.* Spitz or chiritz.

## SAND-MARTIN

### *Riparia riparia*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts, including the tail, pale brown, the wings a slightly darker brown. Under parts white, relieved by a band of pale brown across the breast. Bill brownish-black; legs and irides brown. Length, about 5 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Resemble the adults, except that the wing-coverts are tipped with rufous and the inner secondaries margined with buff. Readily distinguished from

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

House-Martin by smaller size, brown upper parts and absence of white on the rump.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and a passage-migrant. Widely distributed although local. Rare in extreme north of Scotland, Outer Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands. In Ireland it is commoner than the House-Martin.



Sand Martin

**Habit.**—The Sand Martin arrives earlier than the Swallow and the House-Martin, usually appearing towards the end of March, the return migration being nearly over by the close of September, although stragglers occur in the south in October. This bird is more local during the breeding season than the other members of the family, being chiefly confined to sandy districts. Soon after their arrival Sand-Martins may be observed skimming over inland sheets of water, or passing in easy, buoyant flight over river or stream. If the sandbank which has formed their nesting quarters the previous year is in the vicinity of water, as is often the case, the birds lose little time in paying their old nesting burrows a visit, although the work of nest-building or excavating new tunnels may not commence until much later. Should the breeding place be at some distance from water, some time may elapse before it becomes tenanted. This species is sociable at all times, breeding in colonies, sometimes of considerable size, congregating at chosen roosting places, or gathering in large numbers at some favourite lake, pond or river where insect life is abundant.

**Food.**—Insects. Chiefly flies and gnats.

## SWIFT

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally in sandpits, sandy railway cuttings or river banks. Sometimes in gravel pits or banks of earth, or in sandbanks near the sea. The nest is placed at the end of a burrow of varying length, a cavity or chamber being excavated at the end of the tunnel for its reception. *Materials.* Straw and grass stems, lined with feathers. Carelessly constructed. The nest-tunnels are usually well out of reach except in the more secluded districts.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6, occasionally 3 or 7. White, without gloss or markings. *Size.* About  $.7 \times .48$  inches. *Time.* May to July.

**Notes.**—*Song.* A soft and pleasing twitter. *Call or alarm.* A harsh *scharre*.

## SWIFT

*Apus apus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Uniform sooty brown, with the exception of the chin, which is dirty white. Bill very short, and black in colour. Legs are blackish brown; irides brown. Length — about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches: *Sexes alike.* Easily distinguished by sooty appearance and very long wings. *Young.* Similar to the adult, but the white on the chin is more distinct.



Swift (Young)

**Distribution.**—Summer resident and a passage-migrant. Generally distributed, but rare in the north-west of Scotland, the Outer Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands. It is a fairly regular migrant to the above named islands, and nests occasionally in the Inner Hebrides.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Habits.**—A few Swifts usually appear in the south of England and Ireland towards the end of April, but the majority generally arrive about the second week of May. It seldom reaches the more northerly parts until May, this applying to the whole of Scotland. The return movement may be observed on the east coasts as early as the end of June, and by the close of August migration is practically over, although a few birds remain in the south of England until mid-September. The nesting quarters of this species are situated for the most part in our villages and towns, although occasionally at some distance from habitations. A bird of powerful and sustained flight, it wanders to a considerable distance from its breeding places, even after nesting operations have commenced. The Swift breeds in colonies varying in size according to the available accommodation, but isolated nests often occur where suitable sites are few. On hot summer evenings bands of Swifts rush with wild screams high overhead, or, descending, pass with almost incredible speed over the house tops, or wheel wildly round some tall church spire. The birds appear to delight in the hottest weather, and are always more active and noisy during fine warm summers than in cold wet seasons.

**Food.**—Insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Under the eaves of dwellings, barns and other buildings, in holes in church towers, in crevices in sea-cliffs and quarries, or in holes in a ruined building. *Materials.* A few straws or grasses mixed with feathers, and cemented together with a viscous secretion.

**Eggs.**—2 or 3. White. *Size.* About 1'0 × .66 inches.

**Time.** May and June.

**Note.**—A loud harsh scream.

## NIGHTJAR

*Caprimulgus europaeus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts, including wings and tail, grey, beautifully barred and streaked with chestnut, black, brown and buff. Under parts greyish and rusty brown, barred and freckled with dark brown. There are a few white markings around the throat. The outer tail feathers show conspicuous white tips and there are white spots on the primaries. Bill black. The gape is very wide, and furnished with a number of stiff bristles. Legs orange-brown; irides blackish brown. Length, about  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Female.* Slightly duller, and lacks the white on the wings and tail. *Young.* Differ but slightly from the adults. The white markings on the tail and wings of the male are tinged with buff.

**Distribution.**—Summer resident. Generally distributed in suitable localities, except in the Orkneys, Shetlands and Outer Hebrides, where it only occurs as a vagrant.

**Habits.**—The Nightjar is one of the latest migrants to arrive, seldom being seen before the beginning of May, birds continuing to arrive throughout that month, but in smaller numbers towards the end. The migration is at its height about mid-May. Towards the end of August the autumnal movement appears to commence, few birds remaining after the middle of September. The more open parts of woods and copses, and commons and heaths overgrown with gorse, small birch trees or bramble, are the favourite haunts of this bird. During the daytime the Goatsucker, or Nightjar,



Photo: H. Ward Bentham

Nightjar

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

remains in a semi-dormant state upon a bough or on the ground, but at dusk it awakens to activity, circling round in wonderfully graceful flight in quest of moths and other insects. When sitting upon its eggs or young, the Nightjar's protective coloration is undoubtedly of great service to the bird, and as if aware of this provision of Nature, it will remain motionless until almost trodden upon, often feigning injury if compelled to abandon its eggs or chicks.

**Food.**—Insects, chiefly moths and beetles.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* The eggs are laid on the ground amongst stones, dead leaves or bracken, or surrounded by broken pieces of dry sticks. There is no nest in the true sense of the term, no materials being collected by the bird.

**Eggs.**—2. Creamy or greyish white, elliptical in shape, marbled, streaked and blotched with yellowish brown or sepia. The underlying markings are leaden grey in colour  
**Size.** About 1·25 × .87 inches. **Time.** May and June, sometimes July.

**Notes.**—A loud purring trill which has been compared to the whirr of a spinning-wheel. A sharp *ou-it* is uttered during flight, and *quik, quik* appears to be the *alarm note*. The trill usually commences soon after sunset, and continues to late in the evening or even far into the night.

## BEE-EATER

*Merops apiaster*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead white, tinged with green. Head, mantle, back and primary-coverts chestnut. Primaries dark blue; secondaries chestnut, tipped with black; tail green, the two central feathers very pointed and much longer than the remainder. Throat bright yellow, bounded by a black band; rest of under parts greenish blue. Lores and ear-coverts black. Bill long, curved downwards, and black. Legs and irides brown. Length, about 11 inches. *Female.*



## **HOOPOE**

Rather duller. The very brilliant and distinctive coloration of the Bee-eater prevents confusion with any other species.

**Distribution.**—An occasional visitor, generally in spring, but also in autumn. Most frequent in southern and midland counties of England, but has also visited Scotland, where a pair attempted to breed near Edinburgh in 1920. Over 20 recorded from Ireland.

## **HOOPOE**

*Upupa epops*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck and upper part of back cinnamon; rump white. There is a very pronounced crest of deep cinnamon, tipped with black and white. Under parts pinkish cinnamon, with the exception of the flanks, abdomen and under tail-coverts, which are white. Lower back and wings barred with black and white; tail black, with a broad white band crossing near the middle. Bill black, and curved downwards. Legs and irides brown. Length, about 12 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. Very like the adults in appearance.

**Distribution.**—Chiefly a passage-migrant. Most frequent in spring, but also occurs in autumn, and has been noticed in every month of the year. Frequents chiefly the south and south-east coasts of England, and is less regular on the east coast north of the Thames. It has frequently been recorded in spring and autumn on the south coast of Ireland, but has not been known to breed. Elsewhere in the British



*Photo: Monsieur A. Burdet*  
**Hoopoe**

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Isles a vagrant, although there are very few parts which have not been occasionally visited. Has nested from time to time in all the south coast counties and in some other southern counties of England.

**Habits.**—The Hoopoe arrives on the south coasts of England in April and May, chiefly on the shores of Kent and Sussex, the return movement taking place in September and October. In Ireland it sometimes arrives as early as February or March. This beautiful bird would doubtless establish itself as a regular nesting species if allowed to do so, but constant and senseless persecution invariably prevent this.

**Food.**—Worms, grubs and insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally in a hole in a tree, willows often being chosen. Less frequently in a hole in a wall or in a rock-crevice. *Materials.* Often dispensed with, at other times straws, stalks and roots carelessly thrown together. The nest is generally in a very foul condition.

**Eggs.**—5 to 10. Pale greenish blue or brownish yellow, but readily become stained owing to the dirty condition of the nest-hole. *Size.* About  $1\cdot01 \times .70$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Poo-poo-poo.*

## ROLLER

*Coracias garrulus*

**Description.**—*Male.* General coloration bright greenish blue of varying shades, darkest on the central tail feathers and wing-coverts. The back is chestnut-brown; lores black; throat dull white. The outer tail feathers are tipped with black. Bill nearly black; legs dark yellow; irides brown. Length, about 12 inches. *Sexes alike.*

**Distribution.**—An occasional visitor while on migration, occurring chiefly in the south and east of England, but has

## KINGFISHER

been observed in many other parts as far north as Scotland. Occasionally recorded from Ireland. Most often noticed in autumn, but fairly frequently in spring.

## KINGFISHER

*Alcedo atthis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts dark greenish blue, relieved on the head and wings by metallic blue spots, and there is a broad patch of the same colour on the back. Under parts and ear-coverts bright chestnut; chin and sides of neck white. Bill long and straight, black, except at the base of the lower mandible, where it is reddish orange. Legs bright red; irides brown. Length is about 7 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Similar to the adults, except that they are duller, and the bill is entirely black.



Photo : Howard Bentham

### Kingfisher

**Distribution.**—Resident and generally distributed in suitable localities in Great Britain, except north of the Grampians, where it is rare and irregular. In Ireland it is scarce in all parts.

**Habits.**—During the summer months the Kingfisher frequents rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, canals and dykes. In autumn and winter it is subject to considerable local movements, many birds travelling to the coast, especially in severe weather, where they haunt tidal estuaries and marshes. Birds which do not extend their movements to

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

the coast probably shift from one inland locality to another in search of open water during periods of prolonged frost. The Kingfisher becomes much reduced in numbers in very severe winters, but under normal conditions, although not very numerous, it cannot be considered a rare bird. The flight is straight and extremely rapid, and when the bird is on the wing, a shrill whistle is often uttered. When fishing the Kingfisher perches on a bough overhanging the water, or makes use of a fence-rail, boat, boat-house or some other prominent object, where it remains keenly watching until a fish approaches. It then drops swiftly and makes a brief plunge, seldom failing to effect a capture. Sometimes the bird will hover over the water before plunging.

**Food.**—Fish, aquatic insects and shrimps. Occasionally slugs, snails or leeches.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually in the steep bank of a stream or river, often overhung with tree branches and roots. Occasionally in a sand or gravel pit, or in holes in walls. Usually close to the water, but exceptionally at some distance from it. A tunnel three or four feet long is generally excavated by the bird, but a Sand-Martin's or water-vole's hole is sometimes appropriated. *Materials.* A collection of fishbones and disgorged pellets, placed in a chamber at the end of the tunnel.

**Eggs.**—6 to 8, but occasionally more are found. Pure glossy white, and rounded in shape. *Size.* About  $.9 \times .75$  inches. *Time.* February to July.

**Notes.**—A shrill squealing whistle. The song is a short whistling trill, but is not often heard.

## GREEN WOODPECKER

*Picus viridis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown and nape bright crimson; lores and a patch around the eye black. The moustachial streak black, crimson in the centre. Remainder of upper parts yellowish green, with the exception of the golden yellow rump. Wings brownish green, the primaries barred with black and white on the outer webs. Under parts pale greyish green, shading to greenish white on the under tail-coverts. Tail black, the outer webs of the feathers showing brownish bars. Bill dusky; legs grey; irides greyish white. Length, about 13 inches. *Female.* Slightly duller. Moustachial streak entirely black. *Young.* Crown grey, streaked with crimson. Upper parts barred; under parts streaked and barred. Prevailing colour green.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Fairly well distributed in suitable localities in England and Wales, but rare or very local in the six most northern counties of England. Rare wanderer to Scotland and Ireland, but nested at Loch Lomond in 1912.

**Habits.**—The Green Woodpecker frequents the outskirts or more open parts of woods rather than very thickly wooded country, and it is also commonly met with in parks, on wooded commons, or in fairly open country scattered with tall trees. It is always most numerous in localities where much of the timber is decayed. Except for some local movement in autumn and winter this species is sedentary, being very seldom found beyond its breeding areas. The Green Woodpecker obtains much of its insect food amongst trees,



Green Woodpecker

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

but it will wander a considerable distance into open country in search of ants, to which it is extremely partial. When on the ground the bird proceeds in a series of hops, turning its head sharply from side to side, ever on the alert, and seeking safety in the nearest tree when alarmed. Ant-hills are opened up by a few vigorous strokes of the powerful bill, and the occupants extracted dexterously by means of the long tongue.

**Food.**—Largely ants, also various other insects, nuts, berries and grubs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In holes in trees excavated by the bird. Sometimes not more than three feet from the ground, at other times thirty or forty feet above it. *Materials.* Chips of rotten wood which have collected at the bottom of the nest cavity.

**Eggs.**—5 to 8. Pure glossy white. *Size.* About 1·8 × ·92 inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Plue, plue, plue.* Sometimes a harsh *yaff, yaff, yaff.*

## GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

*Dryobates major*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead buff, the feathers around the eyes dirty white, as are also the ear-coverts. Crown, back and rump black. There is a patch of crimson on the nape, a large white mark on the sides of the neck, and a large white patch on the scapulars, which is very conspicuous in flight. The primaries are barred with black and white; tail black, broadly margined with white. Under parts buffish white, except the abdomen and under tail-coverts, which are crimson. Bill greyish black; legs greenish grey; irides crimson. Length, about 9½ inches. *Female.* Lacks the crimson on the nape. *Young.* Crown crimson in both sexes, black areas duller.

## GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Fairly generally distributed in wooded areas of England and Wales, nowhere very abundant, and decidedly scarce in some of the northern counties of England. Breeds sparingly in the south of Scotland, but is extending its range northwards.

The bird known as the Northern Great Spotted Woodpecker occurs as a winter visitor, sometimes in considerable numbers, chiefly on the east coast from Norfolk northwards as far as the Orkneys and Shetlands. Birds which have occurred in Ireland—where the species does not breed—are probably referable to this form.

**Habits.**—The Great Spotted Woodpecker is chiefly confined during the nesting season to forests, well-timbered parks and woods, especially where many of the trees are old and decayed. In winter a good deal of local wandering is noticeable, and at this season the bird is more frequently seen in fairly open country where old trees are numerous.

Although a somewhat shy species, this Woodpecker is not easily overlooked, its conspicuous plumage readily attracting attention. When alarmed the bird often alights near the top of a tall tree, clinging to a slender branch, where it advertises its presence by loud metallic notes of alarm. The Great Spotted Woodpecker appears to be much attached to a chosen nesting place, to which it will return year after year, frequently using the same tree each season.



Great Spotted Woodpecker

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Food.**—Insects, conifer seeds, fruit, ants, beech-mast and acorns.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In holes in trees, often excavated entirely by the bird, but at other times a natural cavity in a decayed portion of a tree is enlarged. Occasionally a hole which has been used in a previous season is occupied. Generally at a considerable height from the ground. *Materials.* None beyond the chips of decayed wood produced in making the cavity.

**Eggs.**—4 to 7, occasionally 8. Glossy white. *Size.* About  $1\cdot05 \times .75$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—A loud *gick* or *quit-quit*.

### LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER

*Dryobates minor*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead brown, crown crimson, bordered by a black line extending to the nape, which is also black; sides of head and neck white. A black line runs from the base of the bill beneath the ear-coverts. Upper part of back black, lower portion white, narrowly barred with black; wings broadly barred with black and white. Central tail feathers black, outer white, barred with black. Under parts brownish white, streaked on the flanks. Bill and legs leaden grey; irides crimson. Length, about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Female.* Crown white; *Lesser Spotted Woodpecker* under parts darker. *Young.* Both sexes are more or less crimson on the crown; black



Photo: Monsieur A. Burdet

## **LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER**

parts duller. This species is distinguished from the Great Spotted Woodpecker by its smaller size, barred back, and absence of red on under parts.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Local in England and on the west side of Wales. Fairly common in some parts of the southern and midland counties of England, but rare or very local in the north. Almost unknown in West Wales, only very casual in the south of Scotland and in Ireland, many of the records from the two last named countries being open to doubt.

**Habits.**—The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker appears to be stationary, apart from some local wandering, being very rarely met with beyond the breeding areas. Somewhat less of a woodland bird than the last described species, it frequents the outskirts rather than the interior of woods, also spinneys, parks, orchards, willow plantations and alder-fringed streams. Large woods of fir, in which the Great Spotted Woodpecker is often fairly numerous, appear to possess little attraction for the smaller bird. The habit of producing a loud drumming noise by rapidly delivered blows of the bill upon the decayed branch or trunk of a tree is common to all three species of Woodpecker, but the drumming of the Lesser Spotted, or Pied Woodpecker, is not so loud as that of its larger relatives.

**Food.**—Various kinds of insects.

**Nest.**—**Situation.** In a hole in the trunk or in a stout branch of a tree. This is from six to fourteen inches deep, and excavated or enlarged by the bird. Apple and pear trees, willows, elms, chestnuts, alders, poplars and birches are amongst the species selected. **Materials.** None, beyond chips of wood at the bottom of the cavity.

**Eggs.**—5 to 9. Glossy white. Smaller than those of the Wryneck, with which they are liable to be confused. **Size.** About .76 x .58 inches. **Time.** May and June.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Notes.**—A shrill *kink* many times repeated in rapid succession. *Alarm.* *Gick*, less loud than the Great Spotted Woodpecker's cry.

### WRYNECK

*Iynx torquilla*

**Description.**—*Male.* The upper parts consist of varying shades of brown and grey, mottled and streaked with buff, greyish white, chestnut-brown and black. The crown is variegated with bars of dark brown and small white spots; the

nape and parts of the back and wings are striped with blackish brown. The dark brown wing-quills are relieved by bars and spots of buff. Tail lichen-grey, with irregular bars of black margined with white. Chin and throat rich buff, with narrow dusky bars; rest of under parts dull white, tinged with buff on the flanks and under tail-coverts and more or less barred and spotted with dark brown. Bill, legs and irides brown. Length, about 7 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. Darker and greyer than adults.



Wryneck

**Distribution.**—Summer resident. Occurs chiefly in the south-east of England, where it is fairly common in some parts, becoming scarce in the south-west. It is found in the Midlands, but is very rare or local in the northern counties. Rare in Wales, especially in the north. To Scotland it is a rare passage-migrant, and has only very occasionally been recorded from Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Wryneck arrives on the south-east coast

## CUCKOO

England in some numbers about the middle of April, a few birds generally reaching us towards the close of March. The return movement is noticeable in late August, most of the birds having left by mid-September. Our nesting Wrynecks are often unevenly distributed even in the southern counties, being fairly numerous in certain areas, while scarce in others. Parks, orchards, hedgerows containing old trees, wooded commons, the open parts of woods, willow-winged streams and timbered gardens are the favourite haunts of the Cuckoo's Mate, or Snake-bird. The Wryneck might easily be overlooked on account of its subdued coloration and somewhat retiring habits were it not for the oft-repeated call note, which is heard from the time of arrival of the bird until early in June, and occasionally later.

**Food.**—Largely ants, but also a variety of other insects. The young appear to be fed largely, if not entirely, upon ants' eggs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually in a natural hole in a tree or post. Sometimes, however, in a deserted Woodpecker's nesting hole or in a nest-box. *Materials.* None, except decayed wood at the bottom of the hole.

**Eggs.**—6 to 10. Pure white. *Size.* About .85 x .55 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Heel, heel, heel,* uttered rapidly about nine times in succession. *Alarm.* *Tik, tik, tik.*

## CUCKOO

*Cuculus canorus*

**Description.—Male.** Upper parts bluish ash-colour, the wings and tail slightly darker than the rest of the plumage. The outer tail feathers are barred and tipped with white, and the central pair have white spots on the shafts. Wing-quills barred with white on the inner webs. Chin, throat and upper breast pale ash-grey, rest of under parts white, with dusky bars. Bill black, yellow at the base. Legs and irides

yellow. Length, about 14 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young Upper parts reddish brown, barred with dark brown. There is a noticeable white patch on the nape, and many of the feathers have white tips. The tail is barred with dark brown and tipped with white. Under parts buffish white, barred with blackish brown.



**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. Abundant and generally distributed. Also occurs as a bird of passage.

**Habits.**—Although a few stragglers occasionally appear in the south of England during the closing days of March, and in the first half of April a considerable number of birds regularly arrive, the main immigration commences about the middle of that month, sometimes continuing for three or four weeks. In the north of England and in Scotland the Cuckoo arrives much later than in the south. The adults are the first to leave our shores, very few apparently remaining after the middle of July. Most of the young birds depart in August, some staying until September. The Cuckoo is not fastidious in the choice of a haunt, frequenting woodlands or open country, low-lying ground or high moorlands. The well known call may be heard continuously under favourable weather conditions from April until about the end of June or early July. In cold seasons the bird undoubtedly calls less frequently and becomes silent earlier in the summer. Parasitic in habits, this species deposits its eggs in the nests of other birds, and although two or even three eggs have been found in one nest, such cases are the result of two or more Cuckoos victimizing the same pair of birds. Shortly after

## SNOWY OWL

The young Cuckoo is hatched it ejects the rightful occupants from the nest, and is thereafter assiduously attended by its foster-parents, they continuing to feed the young impostor even after it has left the nest.

**Food.**—Various insects and their larvæ, occasionally seeds.  
**Eggs.**—General average 8 or 9, according to Mr. Edgar Chance. The colour is very variable, but as a rule the eggs bear a resemblance to those amongst which they are deposited. A common type is not unlike the egg of the Pied Wagtail, and other varieties more or less resemble eggs of the Meadow-Pipit and Reed-Warbler. Greenish blue unspotted eggs are perhaps the most uncommon. **Size.** About .87 × .75 inches. **Time.** April to June. The eggs are deposited in a variety of different nests, including those of the Hedge-Sparrow, Meadow and Tree-Pipits, Pied Wagtail, Robin and Reed-Warbler.

**Notes.**—*Cuckoo* or *cuck-cuckoo*. Also a clear bubbling note and a rather harsh chuckle.

## SNOWY OWL

*Nyctea nyctea*

**Description.**—*Male*. Snowy white, barred with dark brown. The barring is variable, some birds being almost uniform white and others closely marked with brown. The feet and toes are feathered, as are also the soles of the feet. Bill and claws black; irides golden yellow. Length, about 23 inches. *Female*. Larger than male. Length, about 26 inches.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Occurs regularly in very small numbers in the Orkneys and Shetlands, arriving in September or later, and departing in March and April. It is not unusual in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, as well as on the mainland of Scotland. Elsewhere in the British Isles it has been recorded on many occasions, most frequently from the north of Ireland.

## LITTLE OWL

*Athene noctua*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts greyish brown, spotted and barred with white. Wings and tail brown, barred with white. Under parts greyish white, streaked with brown. Bill and irides yellow; legs grey and covered with downy feathers. Length about 6 inches. Sexes alike. *Young.* Differ but little from the adult.



Photo : Howard Bentham

### Little Owls (Young)

increasing. It now probably breeds in most counties of England, has been recorded from several Welsh counties, in some of which it nests. Birds reported from Scotland and Ireland may have been genuine wild migrants from the Continent.

**Habits.**—The Little Owl is now common in many wooded areas, and parks, orchards, quarries, chalk-pits, downland thickets, rabbit-warrens and sea-cliffs are also frequented the bird not being at all particular in its selection of a haunt. Less nocturnal than most Owls, this bird may often be observed abroad during the day, and although it is by no means averse to bright sunshine is most active at dusk or during the hours of darkness, when the unmistakable flute-like call at once attracts attention. The flight is undulatory and less graceful than that of the larger Owls. When the bird is excited or alarmed, a curious bobbing motion of the head

## LONG-EARED OWL

suggests the actions of a Ringed Plover or Redshank in similar circumstances.

**Food.**—Small birds, voles, shrews, mice, earthworms and beetles. Remains of rabbits, rats and bats have been found amongst the pellets.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In holes in trees, walls or buildings; also in quarries, rabbits' burrows, crevices of rocks or in holes in the ground. *Materials.* None.

**Eggs.** 4 or 5, occasionally more. White. *Size.* About  $1\cdot34 \times 1\cdot13$  inches. *Time.* Late April or during May.

**Notes.**—A mournful long-drawn *cuu*, also a mewing cry, and sometimes a soft flute-like whistle. A rapid *Kek-kek-kek* is uttered during nocturnal flights, and also at other times if the bird is alarmed.

## LONG-EARED OWL

*Asio otus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts, including the wings, buff, mottled and streaked with greyish white, brown and blackish brown. Facial disk dusky brown near the eyes, buff on the edges. Under parts buff, streaked with dark brown on the fore-breast, the lower breast and flanks barred and streaked with dusky brown. The buff tail, brownish grey towards the tip, is marked by dusky bars. Bill dusky horn-colour; legs and toes covered with pale yellowish-brown feathers; irides golden yellow. The "ears," or tufts of feathers on the head, are about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length. Length, about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches. *Female.* Somewhat larger and slightly darker. *Young.* Very similar to the adult birds.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor, also occurring as a passage-migrant. Widely distributed but somewhat local.

**Habits.**—The Long-eared Owl is most numerous in forests, woods or plantations of pine trees. It is also found in woods

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

containing clumps of pine, spruce or other evergreen conifers, or in plantations of spruce. In some extensive tracts of pine-clad country this Owl is by no means uncommon, but large woods are not essential, a small group of trees on the fringe of thickly wooded country often harbouring a pair

of birds. Nocturnal in habits, the Long-eared Owl often sits close to the bole of a tree during the daytime, where it remains in an upright and curiously inanimate pose, and is in consequence by no means easily seen, its protective colouration increasing the difficulty of detection.

**Food.**—Mice, voles, rats, small birds, large beetles, toads and frogs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* The old nest of a Crow, Rook, Magpie, Heron, Sparrow-hawk or Wood-Pigeon is adopted. Squirrels'

dreys are also used, and exceptionally the bird nests upon the ground under heather, stunted firs or some other kind of cover. *Materials.* None.

**Eggs.**—3 to 5, rarely 6. White, oval in shape. *Size.* About 1·65 × 1·3 inches. *Time.* March to May.

**Notes.**—A deep hoot. This is a long-drawn *oo*, quite distinct from the Wood Owl's call. When the bird is alarmed a loud *kyak* or a mewing cry is uttered.



Photo: Monsieur A. Burdet

### Long-eared Owl

## SHORT-EARED OWL

*Asio flammens*

**Description.**—*Male.* Facial disk buff, black round the eyes and whitish on the outer edges. Upper parts buff, blotched and streaked with dark brown; wings and tail buff, broadly barred with brown. Under parts pale buff, streaked with sepia. Bill black; irides golden; legs feathered to the toes. On the head are two short tufts of feathers about  $\frac{1}{8}$ ths of an inch in length. Length, about 15 inches. *Sexes alike*, except that the female is slightly the larger bird. *Young.* Closely resemble the adults.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor, also occurs as a passage-migrant. Breeds occasionally in many counties of England and Wales, and probably almost annually in Norfolk. Nests regularly but sparingly and locally in the northern counties of England. Throughout Scotland it breeds sparingly and locally, except in the Inner Hebrides and Shetlands, in both of which groups it is a rare breeding species. It is not known to breed in Ireland. Fairly generally distributed in the British Isles in winter, but varies considerably in numbers at this season, as well as during the breeding period.

**Habits.**—Moorlands, fens, hill-pastures, marshes and sand-dunes are the chosen haunts of the Short-eared Owl during the nesting season, but although less conservative in its choice of a resort at other times of the year, the bird is always found in open country. Large numbers of immigrants sometimes



Short-eared Owl

arrive on the eastern seaboard of Great Britain in autumn, and consequent upon the time of their appearance often coinciding with the date of the Woodcock's arrival, this species is sometimes called the "Woodcock-Owl." The return movement takes place in March and April, but is less noticeable than the autumn migration. The Short-eared Owl is decidedly gregarious as a migrant. When the bird is hunting for food the flight is erratic, and if excited or alarmed this Owl brings the wings sharply downward, the action producing a cracking sound. At other times the flight is straight and silent.

**Food.**—Voles, mice and other small mammals, also beetles and small birds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst heather, gorse, rushes or long grass. *Materials.* Dry grass and moss, but often the eggs are laid in a depression without any attempt at a lining beyond trodden vegetation.

**Eggs.**—4 to 8, sometimes as many as 12. White, without gloss. *Size.* About 1·6 × 1·28 inches. *Time.* April and May, occasionally earlier. Laid at intervals.

**Notes.**—A shrill cry during flight, and a barking *whowk* or snapping of the beak when the bird is alarmed or angered.

## TAWNY OWL



**Description.**—*Male.* Facial disk grey, edged with brown. Head, neck, back and wings tawny brown, marked with dark brown, black and grey. There are light bars on the wings formed by pale tips to the secondaries. Central tail feathers uniform tawny brown; remainder barred with the same colour and dusky brown. Under parts buff, streaked and mottled with brown. Legs and toes covered with greyish white feathers; bill yellowish horn-colour; irides dark brown. Length, about 15 inches. *Sexes alike*.

## TAWNY OWL

in plumage, but the female is somewhat larger than her mate.  
**Young.** Similar to the adults.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Generally distributed in Great Britain, but scarce in the extreme north of Scotland, absent from the Orkneys, Shetlands and Outer Hebrides, and occurring as an introduced species in Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Tawny, Wood or Brown Owl is an inhabitant of woods, forests and parks, especially those containing hollow trees. Although naturally most abundant in the country, the bird is not uncommon in suitable localities in the neighbourhood of towns, and even open spaces in the suburbs of London are not despised. This Owl is very sedentary, and appears very rarely to wander even locally. During the day-

time the bird usually remains in concealment amongst trees, generally not venturing out so early as the Barn-Owl, which may often be seen abroad at dusk or even earlier. The characteristic hoot is most often heard during the breeding season, but is not infrequently uttered in autumn and winter. Occasionally the call may be heard in the daytime, especially if the bird is disturbed.

**Food.**—Voles, mice, rats and other small mammals, also small birds, beetles, frogs, lizards, and occasionally fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually in a hole in a tree, sometimes in barns or other buildings, in crevices amongst rocks, rabbits'



Photo by Brook

Tawny Owl

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burrows, old nests of crows, magpies and other large birds.

Materials.—None.

Eggs.—Usually 3 or 4. White, smooth and rounded. Size. About 1·8 × 1·52 inches. Time. March and April, sometimes much later.

Notes.—The hoot commences with a short *oo-oo*, which is followed by a long quavering *oo-oo-oo-oo*. When on the wing the bird utters a note sounding like *kewick*.

### BARN-OWL

*Tyto alba*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts bright buff, spotted with greyish white, dark brown and dull black, and blotched with grey. The facial disk is rusty brown round the eyes. Under parts white, with a few dark grey spots and slightly tinged with buff on the upper breast. The greyish buff tail is crossed by dark greyish bars. Bill pale grey; legs clothed with white downy feathers; irides black. Length is about 14 inches. *Sexes alike.*

*Young.* Similar to the adult.

#### DISTRIBUTION.—

Resident. Generally distributed in England, but not numerous. Scarcer in Scotland, where it very rarely nests in the north-west and is a rare wanderer to the north-east. Uncommon in Wales and Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Barn, Screech or White Owl is nocturnal in its habits, and although during the nesting period the



Barn-Owls (Young)

## *GREENLAND FALCON*

needs of a hungry family of owlets make it imperative for the parent birds to commence to hunt for food before dark, during the day the birds for the most part remain concealed in a building or hollow tree. The flight is graceful and noiseless, and as the bird beats with slowly flapping pinions low over the fields or around farm buildings in search of small rodents, its presence is often proclaimed by a discordant screech. Although most abundant in the country, the White Owl is by no means averse to more thickly populated areas, being often seen in the neighbourhood of towns. This species is most useful to the agriculturist, as it feeds largely on harmful rodents, a fact which is happily often recognized and appreciated.

**Food.**—Mice, rats, voles, shrews, frogs, beetles and small birds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Placed in church towers, barns, ruins, hollow trees, dwellings and disused windmills. Occasionally dove-cots or crevices amongst rocks are made use of. *Materials.* None, the eggs being laid amongst a collection of pellets composed of undigested portions of the bird's food.

**Eggs.**—4 to 8, sometimes more. Dull white. Laid at intervals, so that eggs and young may be found in the nest at the same time. *Size.* About 1·6 × 1·25 inches. *Time.* April to July, sometimes later.

**Notes.**—A loud screech or hiss.

## *GREENLAND FALCON*

*Falco rusticolus candicans*

**Description.**—*Male.* Pure white, relieved by a few dark grey bars on the back and tail, black tips to the primaries and a few dark spots on the flanks. Bill bluish horn; cere and legs yellow; irides brown. Length, about 21 inches. *Female.* The spots and bars are usually rather larger and

more numerous. Length, about 23 inches. Young. The markings are broader and browner on both upper and under parts.

**Distribution.**—An irregular winter and spring visitor, chiefly to Scotland, and especially to its islands. In Ireland it is not unusual, being most often noticed on the north and west coasts. Occasionally occurs in the north of England and elsewhere.

### PEREGRINE FALCON

*Falco peregrinus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts slate-grey, darkest on the head and nape, barred and spotted with black on the back and wing-coverts, the latter margined with grey. Wing-quills dusky; tail dingy grey, and barred with black. Throat and upper part of breast buffish white; lower breast white, tinged with buff or rufous and barred with black. There is a conspicuous black moustachial streak. Bill blue; legs yellow; irides dark brown. Length, about 15 inches. *Female.* Brownish slate on upper parts and more heavily barred below. Length, about 17 inches. *Young.* Upper parts dusky brown, with reddish margins to the feathers. Under parts streaked instead of barred.

**Distribution.**—Resident and a passage-migrant. In the south of England almost confined as a breeding species to the sea-cliffs of the south and south-west coasts, although a



Photo : C. J. King

Peregrine Falcon

## PEREGRINE FALCON

pair recently nested on an inland cliff in Somerset. In the north of England and in Wales, Scotland and Ireland much more numerous, nesting on inland as well as on sea-cliffs. Especially numerous on the coasts and islands of Scotland.

**Habits.**—In winter our resident Peregrine Falcons are frequently observed inland, and birds of passage to and from Northern Europe occur at times, especially on the east coasts of Great Britain. These migrants are mostly immature birds. The wildest moors, sea-cliffs and mountains form the summer haunts of the Peregrine, although owing to persecution it has been driven from many of its inland eyries, and the majority of nesting sites are now on the more or less inaccessible cliffs of our coasts and islands. This falcon is remarkably powerful on the wing, and will kill both large and small birds, usually striking down its victims during flight, and with astonishing swiftness. Homing pigeons as well as the wild Stock- and Rock-Doves are special favourites.

**Food.**—Sea-birds, pigeons, ducks, waders, grouse, partridges, jackdaws, rooks, starlings and various other birds; also rabbits and rats.

**Nest.—Situation.** On a ledge in the face of a rugged cliff. **Materials.** None, strictly speaking, the eggs being laid in a circular hollow in the turf or amongst the remains of an old nest of the raven, buzzard or crow.

**Eggs.**—2 to 4. Orange-red, deep brownish red or deep purplish brown. Occasionally a good deal of white is visible, and in some eggs a few very dark brown spots occur. **Size.** About  $2\cdot05 \times 1\cdot6$  inches. **Time.** April and May.

**Notes.**—*Kek, kek, kek.* Sometimes a mewing, long-drawn-out *kee*.

## HOBBY

*Falco subbuteo*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts slate-grey, darkest on the head. Cheeks and throat white, the former being relieved by a black moustachial stripe; ear-coverts black. Under parts buffish white, broadly streaked with black. Shank feathers and under tail-coverts rusty red. Bill blue; legs yellow; irides dark brown. Length, about 12 inches. *Female.*

Shank feathers streaked with black, wings broader than those of the male. Length, about 14 inches. *Young.* Upper parts brown, the feathers having light margins. Shank feathers and under tail-coverts paler than in the adult bird.

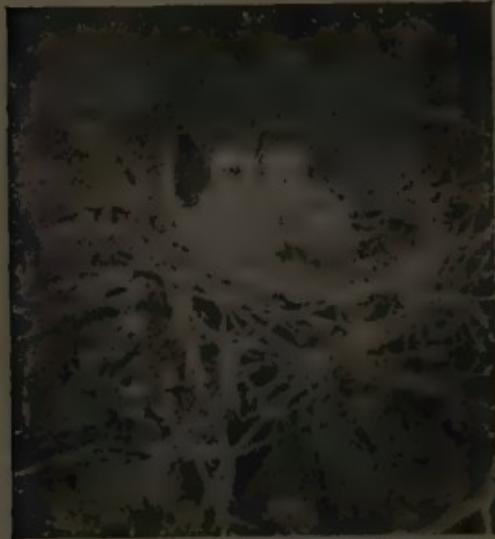


Photo : Capt. C. W. R. Knight

### Hobbies (Young)

commonly in most of the southern counties of England as far west as Devon, and in Gloucester, Salop, Northants, Cambridge, Suffolk, Norfolk and Lincoln, occasionally elsewhere as far north as Yorkshire. To Wales, Scotland and Ireland it is a rare wanderer, but is known to have nested in Scotland on one occasion.

**Habits.**—The Hobby is one of our latest migrants, not reaching us until the end of April or early in May. The return movement takes place chiefly in September, but the bird has been known to remain until October or even November. This little falcon, although nesting in wooded country, usually selects a site adjacent to extensive tracts

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. Nests more or less regularly but not

## HOBBY

of moorland, marsh or downland, over which it travels long distances in search of food. The gliding flight is much more rapid than that of the Kestrel, and the Hobby is particularly fond of soaring in spiral curves, ascending to a great height until it seems a mere speck against the sky. It appears to feed mainly upon large insects, being very partial to the dragon-fly, which it seizes with its feet as it skims lightly just over the tops of reeds or heather, dexterously transferring its prey from claw to beak as it rises swiftly to a height of twenty or thirty feet. The Hobby is much attached to a nesting site, to which it will return season after season even though persistently robbed of its eggs.

**Food.**—Dragon-flies, butterflies, beetles and other large insects; also small birds such as swallows, martins, larks and starlings.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally near the edge of a large wood, or in a group of trees or small wood in comparatively open country. *Materials.* None, the old nest of a Crow, Magpie or other large bird being appropriated. The old home of a Carrion-Crow appears to be most frequently chosen.

**Eggs.**—Usually 3, rarely 2 or 4. Very similar to those of the Kestrel, but generally lighter and more yellowish in colour. Most careful identification is necessary. *Size.* About  $1\cdot7 \times 1\cdot35$  inches. *Time.* June usually, more rarely late May.

**Notes.**—A rapid *keek-keek-keek*, louder and shriller than the very similar cry of the Kestrel. A single sharp note, which is quite distinct from that above described, is often uttered on the wing.

## MERLIN

*Falco columbarius*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts slate-blue, finely streaked with black. Chin and throat nearly white; rest of under parts rufous, streaked with dusky brown. Primaries blackish; tail slate-blue, barred with black and tipped with

white. Bill bluish-horn-colour; legs yellow; irides dark brown. Length is about 10 inches. *Female.* Upper parts dark brown, the feathers having rusty red margins. Under parts pale brownish white, streaked with dusky brown. Tail brown, barred with black. *Young.* Resemble the adult female, except that they are more rufous.

**Distribution.**—Re-

sident and to a limited extent a winter visitor and passage-migrant. Breeds from Yorkshire and Derbyshire northwards and throughout Scotland, also on Exmoor, and in various parts of Wales. In Ireland it nests fairly commonly in suitable localities.

**Habits.**—During the summer months the Merlin is mainly confined to moorland districts, but in some parts of Wales it nests amongst the sand-dunes near the coast. In autumn the higher ground is forsaken, and during the winter the bird is much more generally distributed, when it is by no means rare even in the extreme south of England. Autumn immigrants reach us from Northern Europe, arriving from mid-August to November. The Merlin is much attached to an



Merlin

## KESTREL

old nesting haunt, which it will occupy for many years in succession, if allowed to do so. Although our smallest falcon, this species is an exceedingly plucky little bird, and will fearlessly attack and drive off any large bird which ventures near its nest.

**Food.**—Small birds such as larks, pipits and finches, also thrushes, small waders and occasionally larger birds. Large moths are also eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst deep heather or coarse grasses, sometimes in a hollow amongst marram-grass, or on a cliff. Occasionally the old nest of a Crow or Raven is made use of. *Materials.* A few heather stalks, or a little grass or moss. Frequently no nest material is employed.

**Eggs.**—3 to 6, usually 4 or 5. Creamy white, but so thickly covered with spots, blotches or clouds of dark reddish brown as to almost completely conceal the ground-colour. Closely resemble eggs of the Kestrel and Hobby, but the situation of the nest is usually a safe guide to correct identification. *Size.* About 1·6 × 1·2 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—A shrill chattering *kik-kik-kik*.

## KESTREL

*Falco tinnunculus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, rump and tail slate-grey, the latter tipped with white and having a broad sub-terminal band of black. Back, scapulars and wing-coverts chestnut, spotted with black. Primaries black, edged with grey. Throat white; under parts light rust colour, streaked and spotted with black. Bill blue; legs yellow; irides brown. Length, about 13 inches. Easily distinguished by reddish colour of upper parts. *Female.* Head and neck reddish brown, streaked with black; back and tail similarly coloured,

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

but barred with black. Under parts paler than in male. There is a dusky streak under the eye in both sexes. *Young.* Resemble the female, but are paler.

**Distribution.**—Resident and to some extent a winter visitor. Common and generally distributed throughout the British Isles.



Photo: Howard Benthom

### Kestrel (Young)

breeding birds are sedentary, many leave the north of Scotland and the north and east of Ireland on the approach of winter, and at this season immigrants reach us from the Continent. This hawk may often be recognized by its habit of hovering, this action being much more frequent than in the case of other members of the group.

**Food.**—Mice, the fledged young of small birds, less frequently adult birds, occasionally a pheasant or partridge chick, large insects, moles, lizards and frogs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On ledges or in crevices of sea-cliffs, inland crags, chalk-cliffs and quarries. Hollow trees, ruined buildings, church towers and the old nest of a Crow, Raven, Magpie or other large bird are also utilized. *Materials.* None.

## GOLDEN EAGLE

**Eggs.**—4 to 7. Generally 4 or 5. Yellowish white in ground-colour, usually thickly blotched and clouded with rich reddish or tawny brown. Very variable. **Size.** About 1·55 × 1·25 inches. **Time.** April and May.

**Notes.**—*Kee-kee-kee*, rapidly repeated.

## GOLDEN EAGLE

*Aquila chrysaëtus*

**Description.**—*Male.* General colour dark brown. The head is a lighter brown, the nape golden, primaries black, and the feathers of the mantle and wing-coverts have pale margins. Legs feathered to the toes, by which the bird may be distinguished from the White-tailed Eagle. Bill and claws blackish brown; toes yellow; irides golden brown. Length, about 32 inches. *Female.* Similar in plumage. Length, about 35 inches. *Young.* Tail dull white, with a broad terminal band of dark brown. The feathers of the under parts are white at the base.

**Distribution.**—Resident in the Highlands of Scotland, and the Inner and Outer Hebrides. A very scarce visitor to the Scottish Lowlands, although a pair nested in the south-west as recently as 1921. To England and Wales a rare wanderer, and apparently extinct in Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Golden Eagle formerly nested in Wales



Photo : A. Brook

Golden Eagle, with Young

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Derbyshire, on the Cheviots, and in the Lake District, as well as in the south of Scotland and in Ireland. In some of the deer forests of the Highlands this fine bird is fortunately strictly preserved and has increased in numbers in recent years, so that it is unlikely to share the fate of the Sea-Eagle. It is a sedentary species, apart from a certain amount of wandering by young birds after they leave the nest. The Golden Eagle returns year after year to a chosen nesting haunt, but does not always use the same nest, two or more sites generally being occupied in turn. Some of the nests which have been added to for many years are of enormous size. The eyries are never situated close together, each pair of birds taking possession of a wide range of country, over which they wander great distances in search of food. When food is abundant this bird is a voracious feeder, but is capable of fasting for a considerable period in times of scarcity.

**Food.**—Hares, grouse, ptarmigan, small mammals and birds, rabbits, sickly lambs, and carrion.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On ledges of high but not always inaccessible cliffs, less frequently in trees. *Materials.* Sticks, branches and heather twigs, lined with heather, grass, moss, and usually with clumps of great wood-rush.

**Eggs.**—Usually 2, occasionally 3. Dingy white, blotched, spotted or marbled with reddish brown of varying shades. Sometimes without markings. *Size.* About  $2\cdot9 \times 2\cdot85$  inches. *Time.* March and April.

**Note.**—A barking or yelping cry.

## ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD

*Buteo lagopus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts dark brown, with the exception of the creamy white head and neck, which are streaked with dark brown. The scapulars and wing-coverts are edged with buff. Upper tail-coverts and basal half

## COMMON BUZZARD

of tail white; remainder dark brown, tipped with white and showing a sub-terminal bar of black. Under parts white, barred with dark brown, except on the lower breast, which is generally without markings. Legs feathered to the toes. Bill blackish; toes yellow; irides hazel. Length, about 23 inches. Distinguished from the Common Buzzard by the white base to the tail and the feathered legs. *Female.* Plumage similar to that of male. Length, about 26 inches. *Young.* Browner than the adult and showing less white on the tail. The under parts are streaked instead of barred.

**Distribution**—An irregular passage-migrant and winter visitor to the east side of England and Scotland as far south as Norfolk, occasionally appearing in large numbers. Elsewhere of much rarer occurrence or merely an occasional wanderer, being especially rare in the west. A very unusual visitor to Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Rough-legged Buzzard visits us chiefly as a bird of passage to and from its breeding grounds in the north of Europe, but if undisturbed a few birds will sometimes remain throughout the winter. It usually appears in October or November, and most of the birds which reach us are immature. This Buzzard shows a marked partiality for rabbits, and its haunts in this country are often in the vicinity of warrens. The bird appears at all times to be less of a woodland species than the Common Buzzard.

**Food.**—Rabbits, leverets and other small mammals; also lizards, frogs and carrion.

**Note.**—*Mee-oo.* Louder than cry of the Common Buzzard

## COMMON BUZZARD

*Buteo buteo*

**Description.**—*Male.* Plumage variable, but usually dark brown, except on the lower breast and belly, which are dirty white, barred and sometimes streaked with brown.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Tail barred with black and ash-colour ; wing-quills brownish black. Bill bluish black ; legs yellow ; irides brown. Length, about 21 inches. *Sexes alike in plumage*, but the female is the larger bird.



### Common Buzzard (Young)

stationary, but from the extreme north there is a southward movement in winter. The Common Buzzard visits us irregularly as a cold weather migrant. At one time this fine species was found commonly in wooded localities throughout the British Isles, but persecution has banished it from all but the wilder hill and mountain districts, and the more inaccessible sea-cliffs. A bird of somewhat sluggish habits, and unwilling to take wing until approached fairly closely, the destruction of the Buzzard is often an all too easy task. Its actions are rather laboured as it rises from a tree or crag, but when fairly launched on the wing, the bird proceeds with strong and graceful flight. The Buzzard is fond of soaring to considerable heights, and in localities where the species is not rare, the sight of three or four birds on the

## MARSH HARRIER

wing together is not unusual. When hunting for food the bird flaps for a few yards with slow beats of its broad pinions, then glides gracefully with wings held motionless high above the back.

**Food.**—Rabbits, mice, rats, lizards, worms, beetles and carrion.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually upon an inland or maritime cliff, but sometimes in trees. *Materials.* Sticks and twigs in large numbers, lined with grass, wool and fresh green sprays of foliage from trees. The latter are renewed from time to time.

**Eggs.**—2 or 3. Dingy white, bluish or greenish white, blotched, streaked and spotted with red-brown and pale rusty red. Occasionally without markings. *Size.* About  $2\cdot16 \times 1\cdot72$  inches. *Time.* April and May.

**Note.**—A plaintive mewing cry sounding something like *pe-e-i-o-oo*.

## MARSH HARRIER

*Circus aeruginosus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, nape and sides of head pale yellowish white, streaked with dark brown. Rest of upper parts umber-brown, except the secondaries and tail, which are ash-grey, and the primaries, which are dusky brown. Chin and throat buffish white, rest of under parts reddish brown, streaked with dark brown. Bill bluish-black; legs and irides yellow. Length, about 21 inches. *Female.* Larger and slightly duller. Tail brown, tinged with grey. Length, about 24 inches. *Young.* Uniform brown, but showing great variation. The light coloration of the head is assumed later.

**Distribution.**—Occasionally attempts to nest in the Broads district of Norfolk, and on the bogs in the central

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

and western districts of Ireland. Elsewhere it is a rare spring and autumn visitor from the Continent.

**Habits.**—The Marsh Harrier has been brought to the verge of extermination largely through the reclamation of

many of the extensive tracts of bog and marshland where it at one time nested, and its numbers have also doubtless been further reduced in the interests of the game preserver, the Harrier's fondness for eggs being only too well known. The collector has also been responsible to a lesser extent for the present rarity of this fine species, which it

is to be feared will



soon be numbered amongst our lost breeding birds. The Marsh Harrier's methods of hunting are very similar to those of the other Harriers. It delights in a broad expanse of dense reed-beds, over which it beats in leisurely fashion in search of birds and small mammals, carefully searching every yard of the ground as it proceeds with deliberate strokes of the powerful wings, alternating with sailing flights, when the pinions are often held almost at right angles to the body. At other times the bird engages in soaring flights, mounting in wide curves, and often ascending to a great height.

**Food.**—Small birds and mammals, reptiles, insects and

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On marshy ground, amongst sedges

## MONTAGU'S HARRIER

and reeds, or under small bushes. *Materials.* Sticks, twigs, sedges and reeds, lined with dead grasses. A substantial structure raised well above the marsh.

**Eggs.**—3 to 6. Similar in colour to those of the Hen Harrier. *Size.* About 1·95 x 1·55 inches. *Time.* May.

**Notes.**—Male. *Koi* or *kai*. Female. *Pitz-pitz* or *peep-peep*.

## MONTAGU'S HARRIER

*Circus pygargus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts bluish grey. The primaries are black, and there is a black bar across the secondaries. Upper tail-coverts ash-grey; tail grey, barred with dark brown on the outer feathers. The under parts are greyish white, streaked with rufous. Bill blackish; legs and irides yellow. Length, about 18 inches. Examples of a sooty black colour are not infrequently recorded. The light form is distinguished from the male Hen Harrier by the streaked under parts and dark bar on the wings. *Female.* Upper parts dark brown, paler on the head and neck, which are streaked. There is a buff mark over the eye, and the facial disk has light edges. Chin buff; under parts yellowish rust-colour, streaked with rufous. Upper tail-coverts white, tail greyish brown, crossed by dark bars. Irides hazel. Length,



Photo. Monsieur A. Burdet

Montagu's Harrier (Female)  
with Young

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about  $19\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Young.* Resemble the female, but the feathers of the upper parts are edged with buff, and the under parts are rusty red, faintly streaked.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. Breeds annually in East Anglia, and occasionally elsewhere, but chiefly in the southern counties of England. Occurs rarely in Scotland and Ireland.

**Habits.**—Montagu's Harrier usually arrives in the second half of April, remaining until October or even November. Extensive tracts of marshland and moorland country form the haunts of this Harrier, which fortunately still survives in small numbers as a regular nesting species in the Norfolk Broadlands. If the birds were not molested by gunners and collectors, they would undoubtedly re-establish themselves in many of their old haunts in Southern England, where they still occasionally breed, or attempt to do so. When disturbed at its nesting place Montagu's Harrier ascends to a considerable height, flying round in wide circles, but rarely uttering the alarm cry until after the young are hatched. The bird shows some caution in returning to the nest when once it has been flushed, at first keeping high overhead, but gradually descending in ever lessening circles until within a few feet of the ground, finally dropping right on to the nest or alighting very near it. Incubation appears to commence as soon as the first egg is laid. The male bird during the incubation period covers a wide range in search of food, and when not engaged in hunting, keeps guard over his sitting mate, taking up a position on a low tree, rock or other prominent object.

**Food.**—Small birds, eggs, mice, frogs, lizards and grasshoppers.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst gorse or long heather when in moorland country, concealed by rushes, long grass or low brushwood when built in a marsh. *Materials.* Heather twigs and grasses, or reeds and sedges. In dry

## HEN HARRIER

situations little material is used, but in wet localities the nest is often a bulky structure. Materials are added as incubation advances.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Similar in colour to the Hen Harrier's, but usually slightly smaller. **Size.** About  $1\cdot65 \times 1\cdot4$  inches. **Time.** Late May or early June.

**Notes.**—Check-check-check.

## HEN HARRIER

*Circus cyaneus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts pale slate-grey, except the wing-primaries, which are nearly black, and the rump which is white. Chin, throat and breast bluish grey, rest of under parts white, except the under side of the tail, which is very light grey, with faint bars of a darker tinge. Bill is bluish black; legs and irides yellow. Length, about 19 inches. *Female.* Upper surface dark brown, with the exception of the white rump, which is spotted with rufous. The nape is mottled with white and the brown tail is barred with bluish grey. Under parts rufous, streaked with dark brown. Irides brown. Length, about 21 inches. *Young.* Resemble female, but are more reddish on the upper parts and lighter on the breast.

**Distribution.**—Resident, passage-migrant and winter



Nest of Hen Harrier

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

visitor. Now almost confined as a breeding species to the Outer Hebrides and Orkneys, and possibly some of the wilder districts of Ireland. As a winter visitor, and also as a migrant in spring and autumn it is more widely dispersed, and occurs in the eastern and southern counties of England.

**Habits.**—Moorlands, fens, marshes and mountain-sides are the favourite haunts of the Hen Harrier. The bird formerly nested on the higher ground in many parts of the British Isles, but game preservation has caused a rapid decline in its numbers, and it is doubtful whether it will long survive as a breeding species. In autumn young birds are fairly numerous as migrants, but are rarely met with during the return passage. A few birds, apparently chiefly adults, appear to remain throughout the winter. When hunting for food this Harrier carefully quarters the ground, at first keeping low down, and rising to a height of twenty feet or more immediately its prey is sighted, when it hovers momentarily and then swoops down upon its victim, striking dead with a single blow such large birds as Grouse, Pheasants or Partridges.

**Food.**—Birds, small mammals, reptiles, insects and birds' eggs. The young are reared largely upon nestling birds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground concealed by long heather, gorse or other vegetation. *Materials.* Small sticks, heather stalks and coarse grasses. Used sparingly when the nest is on dry ground, but in damp situations a much more substantial structure is provided.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. Pale bluish white, occasionally slightly marked with a few blotches or spots of pale rusty red. *Size.* About  $1\cdot75 \times 1\cdot45$  inches. *Time.* Late April, or in May or June.

**Note.**—A chattering *kek-kek-kek*.

## SPARROW-HAWK

*Accipiter nisus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts dark slate-grey, the tail tinged with brown and barred with grey. There is a white spot on the nape, and the dark brown wing-quills are barred with grey. Under parts more or less rust-colour, barred with reddish brown. Bill bluish; legs yellow; irides orange. Length, about 13 inches. This bird may be distinguished from the Kestrel by the shorter and less pointed wings, and the brownish or slate-grey coloration of the upper parts. *Female.* Browner on the back. Under parts white, barred with grey or brown, and sometimes tinged with rufous, especially in very old birds. Length, about 15 inches. *Young.* Similar to female, except that the feathers of the upper parts are margined with rufous.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Generally distributed in wooded areas. It is rare in the Orkneys and Shetlands, and in the extreme north of Scotland. A rare wanderer to the Outer Hebrides.

**Habits.**—Our nesting birds are resident, but in autumn the Sparrow-Hawk is frequently observed on the east coast of Great Britain as an immigrant from the Continent. When the Sparrow-Hawk is hunting for food the flight is remarkably swift, and at such times the bird keeps close to the ground, singles out one bird from a flock, which it relentlessly pursues, seldom failing to effect a capture. At other times this hawk will swiftly pounce upon some unwary bird



Sparrow-Hawk (Female)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

lurking in tree or hedgerow. The Sparrow-Hawk is much attached to a nesting place, to which it will return year after year, although usually constructing a fresh nest each season. It has been stated that the old nest of some other large bird is often utilized, but the majority of nests we have examined have apparently been constructed partly or entirely by the birds themselves.

**Food.**—Rats, mice, young rabbits, small birds, and sometimes wood-pigeons and lapwings.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In conifers, oaks and other trees, generally in a fork or on a strong horizontal branch. *Materials.* Sticks and twigs. Small pieces of flattened bark are sometimes added as a lining.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6. White, tinged with blue or bluish green, sometimes boldly blotched and spotted with dark reddish or purplish brown and pale brown, at other times only lightly spotted or smeared with varying shades of brown. *Size.* About  $1\cdot65 \times 1\cdot3$  inches. *Time.* Late April, or in May or June.

**Notes.**—*Kip-kip-kip.*

## KITE

*Milvus milvus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck greyish white, streaked with black. Back and wing-coverts dusky, bordered with rust-red; wing-quills dusky black. The darkly streaked under parts are reddish brown, whitish on the chin, throat and under tail-coverts. Tail rufous and deeply forked. Bill horn-coloured; legs and irides yellow. Length, about 23 inches. Easily recognized by the strongly forked tail. *Female.* Rather duller. Length, about 25 inches. *Young.* Much duller. Head pale brown, with dark streaks. Tail barred with black, except on the central feathers.

**Distribution.**—Many years ago abundant, but at the

## KITE

present time confined as a breeding bird to Mid-Wales, where only five birds were known to survive in 1905. Has somewhat increased in more recent years as a result of protection.

**Habits.**—The Kite is a sedentary bird and rarely wanders beyond its breeding area. A few stragglers from the Continent are occasionally observed on the east side of Great Britain. This bird often flies great distances in search of food, and from its gliding manner of flight is sometimes known as the Glead. When hunting the Kite flies low down, the gliding action alternating with occasional flaps of the long, pointed wings.

The bird returns to an old breeding place year after year. The note is not unlike the mewing cry of the Common Buzzard, but the Kite is a remarkably silent bird, and is seldom heard calling except during the nesting period.

**Food.**—Rabbits and other small mammals, also birds, frogs and lizards.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In the forked branch of a tree or on several branches close to the trunk. At varying heights. *Materials.* Sticks and twigs, lined with grass, turf, moss, wool, rags, bits of paper and a variety of rubbish. The old nest of another species is said to be sometimes used as a foundation.

**Eggs.**—2 or 3. Dull white or bluish white, blotched.



Young Kites in Eyrie

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

spotted, streaked and smeared with reddish brown. The markings are generally most numerous at the larger end.  
*Size.* About 2·25 × 1·75 inches. *Time.* April and May.

**Note.**—A shrill *wheiou* or *whew*.

### WHITE-TAILED EAGLE

*Haliaetus albicilla*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts brown, except the head and neck, which are ashy brown, almost white in very old birds. Tail white. Under parts chocolate-brown. Bill and legs yellow; irides pale yellow. Length, about 33 inches. *Female.* Similar in plumage to male, and about 38 inches in length. *Young.* Darker than adults, and mottled on the mantle and median wing-coverts. Tail whitish brown, mottled with dark brown. Under parts dark brown, and speckled. Bill black; legs yellow; irides dark brown.

**Distribution.**—Apparently now extinct as a nesting species, having disappeared from its last strongholds in the Outer Hebrides, Shetlands and Ireland. Now a rare migrant in autumn and winter, chiefly on the east side of England. Most of the birds observed are immature.

**Habits.**—Many of the haunts of this bird were maritime, as the name of Sea-Eagle denotes, but when the species was comparatively numerous many pairs frequented inland lochs and fresh-water lakes. Many years ago this fine species was much commoner than the Golden Eagle, but incessant persecution by gamekeepers, shepherds and gillies, to which must be added the depredations of collectors, have apparently resulted in the complete extermination of our once resident pairs. The breeding birds wandered great distances in search of prey, a habit which must have much increased the difficulty of effectual protection. Young birds wandered far and wide, and often strayed southward from their Highland homes, reaching the Scottish Lowlands and

## HONEY-BUZZARD

even England, where no doubt many were shot or trapped.

**Food.**—Carrion, fish, water-fowl and other birds; also hares, rabbits, rats and mice.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* The last surviving pairs built on precipitous sea-cliffs, but before so much reduced in numbers, the Sea-Eagle made its eyrie also on inland crags, in a tree, or on a rocky island in some mountain loch. *Materials.* Sticks, twigs, seaweed, heather, grass and wool.

**Eggs.**—Usually 2, occasionally 3. White, sometimes slightly marked with pale reddish brown. *Size.* About  $3 \cdot 0 \times 2 \cdot 25$  inches. *Time.* March to May.

**Note.**—A barking cry.

## HONEY-BUZZARD

*Pernis apivorus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Coloration very variable. A common type has the head, lores and ear-coverts grey, upper parts dark brown, the tail brown, barred with grey. Under parts white, spotted and barred with brown. Bill blackish; legs and irides yellow. Length, 22 to 25 inches. Some birds are mostly brown on the under parts. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Tail irregularly mottled and barred with greyish brown. The feathers of the upper parts have pale edges.

**Distribution.**—Formerly a rare summer resident, nesting especially in the New Forest. At the present time an uncommon passage-migrant, appearing in some parts of Great Britain almost annually, usually in May, June, September or October, but most frequently in autumn. Occasionally visits Ireland.

**Habits.**—The name of Honey-Buzzard is misleading, as the bird's favourite food is the larvae of wasps. The nests of wild bees are destroyed, but this is done in order to obtain the grub occupants and not the honey. The bird shows not

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

the slightest fear of wasps, the nests of which it digs out with its claws. When the Honey-Buzzard nested with us it left its wooded haunts early in the autumn, the old and young birds sometimes migrating in company.

**Food.**—Larvae of wasps and bees, also birds' eggs, small birds and mammals, frogs, lizards and large beetles.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally built upon the old nest of another species in an oak, beech or other deciduous tree. The lining consists of fresh green leaves and twigs, which are renewed from time to time.

**Eggs.**—2, rarely 3. White, boldly blotched and smeared with deep reddish brown. The white is sometimes nearly obscured by the markings. *Size.* About  $2 \times 1\cdot62$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—A short, sharp cry or a melancholy wail.

## OSPREY

*Pandion haliaetus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head white, streaked on the crown with dark brown, and there is a broad band of dark brown from the eye to the nape. The head feathers are somewhat elongated, forming a slight crest. Back, wings and tail dark brown, glossed with purple. Under parts white, with a band of brown across the breast. Bill black; legs blue; irides yellow. Length, about 22 inches. *Female.* Similar in colour. Length, about 24 inches. *Young.* The feathers of the upper parts have pale edges and tips. The tail is barred.

**Distribution.**—Now a rare visitor during migration. Formerly nested in several places in the Highlands of Scotland, but now apparently extinct as a breeding bird.

**Habits.**—The Osprey is a rare but fairly regular visitor, usually from March to May, and in September and October, occurring on the coasts of England or at inland waters.

## SPOONBILL

It is recorded occasionally from Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The majority of migrants are immature birds. Although in this country the Osprey feeds almost exclusively upon fish, it has, nevertheless, suffered at the hands of the game-keeper, and the numbers of our breeding birds were doubtless further reduced in the interests of the angler. Unscrupulous egg-collectors have also contributed to the bird's extinction as a breeder.

**Food.**—Almost entirely fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In Scotland the eyries were placed near the top of a tree, on the summit of an inland crag, or on the highest point of a ruined building. *Materials.* Sticks, twigs, turf, moss, wool and grass.

**Eggs.**—2 or 3. White to dull yellowish white, blotched with deep reddish or purplish brown, with underlying markings of brownish grey. *Size.* About  $2\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{8}{9}$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Kai, kai, kai.*



Osprey

## SPOONBILL

*Platalea leucorodia*

**Description.**—*Male.* The white plumage is tinged with buff on the pendant crest and on the fore-neck. Bill broad, yellow in colour, barred with black, except on the broad spoon-like end. There is a bare orange patch in the region of the throat. Legs black; irides red. Length, about 36 inches. *Female.* Similar in colour, but may be

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

distinguished in summer by the much smaller crest, which is absent in both sexes in winter. *Young.* Lack the crest and the bill is much narrower.



Spoonbill and Young

species in a few places two and a half centuries ago.

**Distribution.**—The Spoonbill occurs in small numbers as a passage-migrant, and is an annual visitor to Norfolk, chiefly from April to June, and from August to October. It is frequently recorded from Kent as a spring migrant, and appears in Hampshire and Devonshire with some regularity, but elsewhere is a vagrant. Generally seen on or near our coasts. Formerly nested in East Anglia, Sussex, Middlesex and Pembrokeshire, and still lingered as a breeding

## GLOSSY IBIS

*Plegadis falcinellus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Dark chestnut-red, glossed on the crown with dark metallic green, and on the scapulars and wing-coverts with green and purple. The long, brown bill is curved downwards; legs greenish grey; irides brown. Length, about 22 inches. *Female.* Rather smaller and duller. The bill is shorter. In winter the plumage of both sexes becomes mostly dull brown, but retains the metallic gloss. *Young.* Resemble the adult in winter plumage, but the head and throat are streaked with white.

**Distribution.**—Autumn visitor, occurring very rarely in spring. Appears almost annually between August and

## COMMON HERON

November somewhere along our shores, but most often on the east, south and south-west coasts of England as far north as Yorkshire. Elsewhere of much less frequent appearance, and very rare inland. Often occurs in small parties.

## COMMON HERON

*Ardea cinerea*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead, crown and cheeks white—a black band passes from the base of the bill over the eye, terminating in a long black crest. Upper parts, including the wing-coverts, bluish grey; primaries greyish black; tail ash-grey; neck white, and streaked with dark bluish grey. The feathers on the lower part of the neck are elongated, and hang loosely down. Under parts greyish white, relieved by a black band on either side. Bill and irides yellow; legs greenish brown. Length, about 36 inches. *Sexes alike*, except that the crest of the female is shorter, and her coloration is slightly duller. *Young.* Almost uniform ash-colour, but they lack the crest, and also the pendant feathers at the base of the neck.

**Distribution.**—Resident, also a winter visitor. Generally distributed, but does not breed in the Shetlands, although it does so in the Orkneys. A few pairs nest in the Outer Hebrides. Most of the largest colonies are in England, but the bird appears to be more general in parts of Scotland and Ireland.



Common Heron (Young)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Habits.**—Our nesting Herons are apparently sedentary, the heronries being tenanted from January or February to August, but during the winter months the birds wander to a certain extent, and at this season undoubtedly cover a wide range in search of food. In autumn numbers of immigrants reach us from the Continent. The heronries vary considerably in size, and isolated nests are not unusual. Even after the young are reared, the Heron is more or less sociable, two or three birds, or even parties up to a dozen or more, occurring perhaps almost as frequently as single birds. When at rest the Heron stands motionless, with the head sunk between the shoulders, but assumes a less upright position when feeding, proceeding cautiously with the body tilted forward. The bird will often wade into deep water in search of fish.

**Food.**—Principally fish, also small mammals, reptiles, mussels, large insects and young birds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a tall tree in a wood or plantation, and at no great distance from water. Nests are, however, sometimes placed on the ground under a tree, in low bushes growing on islands in lochs, on sea-cliffs or in marshes. *Materials.* Sticks and dead branches, lined with twigs, dead grass and roots. A huge structure.

**Eggs.**—3 to 5. Pale greenish blue, without gloss. *Size.* About  $2\cdot5 \times 1\cdot7$  inches. *Time.* January to April, sometimes later.

**Notes.**—A harsh loud *garowk* or *frank*. At the nesting colony a variety of other harsh sounds are uttered.

### NIGHT-HERON

*Nycticorax nycticorax*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead white, crown, hind-neck and upper back black, glossed with dark blue or green. Two long narrow white plumes extend from the back of the

## LITTLE BITTERN

neck. Lower back, rump and upper tail-coverts grey. Throat, cheeks and under parts white. Wings and fore-neck grey. Upper mandible black, flesh colour on the edges; lower mandible flesh colour, tipped with black. Irides crimson; legs yellow. Length, about 20 inches. *Female.* Duller in colour. The plumes are shorter. *Young.* Plumes absent. Feathers brownish black above, spotted with white. Under parts white, streaked with brown and buff. Irides brown. Pendant neck-feathers of adult absent in winter.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant, occurring most frequently in spring and autumn, but occasionally in summer and winter. It has often been observed on the south and east coasts of England as far north as Yorkshire, and has been seen inland not infrequently. Rare in the north and west of England, very rare in Scotland, but has been more often recorded from Ireland.

## LITTLE BITTERN

*Ixobrychus minutus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, back of neck and back greenish black. The rest of the plumage is buff, palest on the wing-coverts, and the breast and flanks are streaked with dark brown. Bill purplish yellow; legs greenish yellow; irides yellow. Length, about 12 inches. *Female.* Crown deep brown; back and wing-coverts greyish brown, the feathers edged with buff. The hind-neck is reddish brown, and the buff under parts are streaked with dark brown. *Young.* Resemble the female.

**Distribution.**—An irregular visitor, occurring chiefly in spring and summer, less frequently in autumn, and rarely in winter. It has been recorded from most parts of England, the southern and eastern counties being most frequently visited. Rarer in Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Little Bittern probably formerly nested in

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Norfolk, and its presence in spring and summer suggests that it would re-establish itself if allowed to do so. This bird delights in dense beds of tall reeds, and its skulking nature doubtless causes it to be not infrequently overlooked; moreover, it feeds at night, a habit which further impedes observation. When suspicious of danger the Little Bittern remains motionless, the neck extended to its full length, the bill pointing skywards and the breast turned towards the intruder. While the bird remains in this rigid attitude it is extremely difficult to detect amongst the reeds.

**Food.**—Small fish, reptiles, worms and aquatic insects.

**Note.**—The male has a booming call resembling that of the Common Bittern.

### COMMON BITTERN

*Botaurus stellaris*

**Description.**—*Male.* General coloration rich buff, barred and blotched with black, especially on the upper parts. Crown and nape black. The feathers of the fore-neck are elongated, forming a frill. A dark band passes down the centre of the neck, and on either side of the neck there is a similarly coloured band. Extending downwards from the eye is a black moustachial streak. The light buff under parts are boldly streaked with brown. Bill yellowish green; irides yellow; legs grass-green. Length, about 28 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Very similar to the adults.

**Distribution.**—Chiefly a winter visitor and a spring and autumn migrant. Breeds regularly in small numbers in the Norfolk Broads district, and is gradually increasing under protection. To Scotland and Ireland an irregular visitor, but has occurred in most parts. The bird is of irregular occurrence outside its breeding area in England.

**Habits.**—Dense and extensive reed-beds are the haunts of the Bittern, where the wonderfully mottled and barred

## COMMON BITTERN

plumage of buff, brown and black harmonizes in a marked manner with the bird's natural surroundings. When approached, this bird will remain motionless, with its head and neck thrust upwards and the bill pointing towards the sky, and while in this attitude it is particularly hard to distinguish from the surrounding reeds. If alarmed, the Bittern will crouch amongst dead vegetation, with the dagger-like bill pointing upwards and ready to strike in self-defence. During the day-time, except when there are young in the nest, the bird remains for the most part concealed amongst dense aquatic vegetation. The booming sound produced by the Bittern may be heard both during the day and night, from January to June.

**Food.**—Small mammals, birds, frogs, fish, eels and water-beetles.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In dense beds of dead reeds or bulrushes. *Materials.* Dead reed stems.

**Eggs.**—3 to 6, usually 5. Uniform olive-brown, sometimes tinged with green. *Size.* About  $2\cdot09 \times 1\cdot51$  inches. *Time.* End of March, or early April to June.

**Notes.**—A booming sound, often compared to the bellowing of a bull. A note sounding something like *kwawk* is uttered when the bird is alarmed.



*Hidden amongst the Bulrushes*  
**COMMON BITTERN**

## WHOOPER SWAN

*Cygnus cygnus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Uniform white in plumage. Base of beak lemon-yellow, this colour extending to the eye in a narrow band of bare skin—remainder of bill, including the edges, black. Legs, toes and webs black; irides dark brown. Length, about 60 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Ash-brown above, paler beneath. Bill dull flesh-colour, tipped and edged with black, central portion orange-yellow. Legs flesh-colour. The completely white dress is not attained before the third year.

**Distribution.**—Chiefly a winter visitor. It is of frequent occurrence in Scotland, less often observed in England, and rare in Ireland. The Whooper was said to have bred in Perthshire in 1919, and in 1921 a nest was found at a loch in the West Highlands, this interesting discovery being recorded by Mrs. Audrey Gordon, who published photographs of the bird and nest. Nesting in Northumberland was reported in 1923. Pinioned birds have nested in the Shetlands since 1910.

**Habits.**—The Whooper visits the Scottish coasts annually, a few birds arriving in October, but the majority not until November. Their numbers vary greatly from season to season, and in severe weather the species is always more abundant. It is usually in hard winters that the Whooper Swan occurs on the coasts of England, and at such times it is sometimes noticed even on the south coast. To Ireland the bird is a much rarer visitor than the smaller Bewick's Swan. The return migration takes place in March or April, although birds sometimes linger until May or June. As a migrant this Swan is gregarious, and travels both by day and night. On the water the Whooper is less graceful in its actions than the Mute Swan, and the neck is held erect. These characteristics serve to distinguish the bird from its commoner relative, quite apart from the strikingly different coloration of the bill.

## BEWICK'S SWAN

**Food.**—Roots and stems of aquatic plants, water-insects, worms and small frogs.

**Note.**—A trumpet-like call, which has been described as a loud *whoo-whoo* or *whoop-whoop*, several times repeated.

## BEWICK'S SWAN

*Cygnus bewickii*

**Description.**—*Male.* Plumage white. Bill black, orange-yellow at the base, but this area is much smaller than in the Whooper Swan, and does not extend beyond the nostrils. Also distinguished from the Whooper by its much smaller size. Legs, toes and webs black; irides dark brown. Length, about 50 inches. *Sexes alike*, except that the female is the smaller bird. *Young.* Greyish brown.; irides yellow. The patch on the bill is at first pinkish, later it becomes yellow, but is paler than in the fully adult bird.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor to our coasts. Occurs fairly frequently in England and Wales in hard winters, and at times is numerous in Scotland, especially on the west coast and in the Hebrides. A regular visitor to parts of Ireland, where it is more numerous and generally distributed in severe winters than in mild seasons.

**Habits.**—Bewick's Swan usually arrives in November, rarely in October, departing in February or March. Its numbers vary greatly from year to year. In its habits this species closely resembles the larger Whooper Swan, but is less often seen inland, and is more gregarious.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the other Swans.

**Note.**—A loud barking sound. The notes of an approaching flock heard from a distance have been likened to the cries of a pack of hounds or the "honking" notes of wild geese. Less musical than the Whooper's call.

## MUTE SWAN

*Cygnus olor*

**Description.**—*Male.* Plumage uniform white. Bill reddish orange, black at the tip and on the edges. The knob, or "berry," at the base of the upper mandible, and the naked skin between the eyes and the base of the beak black. Irides

dark brown. Legs, toes and webs are black. Length, about 60 inches.

*Female.* The neck is more slender and the knob at base of bill smaller. *Young.* Upper parts sooty grey in the first plumage, the under parts paler. Bill and legs grey. There is no knob at the base of the bill.

**Distribution.**—Re-

sident in a more or less domesticated state, although genuine wild birds may sometimes visit our shores in winter. Originally introduced. Generally distributed.

**Habits.**—The Mute Swan is a common species on our lakes, ornamental waters, broads and large rivers. Although many birds may be regarded as semi-domesticated, others have largely reverted to a natural state, and lead a more independent life. In some localities this Swan is extremely abundant, and the well known Abbotsbury swannery, in Dorset, may contain four or five hundred pairs in the nesting season, although all these do not breed. Large numbers are also found on the Thames and most of our bigger rivers. In winter numbers of birds frequent our coasts and tidal waters, but as truly wild Swans do not differ in any respect from the descendants of our introduced stock, it is impossible to



Mute Swans

## GREY LAG GOOSE

determine whether any of the flocks contain genuine immigrants from the Continent.

**Food.**—Various kinds of aquatic weeds, also insects. Domesticated birds feed upon grain and bread.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Generally on an islet in a lake or large pond, or on the banks of sluggish rivers. Built close to the water. *Materials.* Dead reeds, flags, rushes and grass; lined with down. A huge structure,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 feet in height, and 5 or 6 feet in diameter.

**Eggs.**—3 to 12, usually 6 or 7. Dull greenish white  
**Size.** About  $4\cdot5 \times 2\cdot9$  inches. **Time.** March, April, May.

**Notes.**—A grunting sound or an angry trumpet-like note. In the pairing season, low soft notes may be heard.

## GREY LAG GOOSE

*Anser anser*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts ash-brown, darker on the primaries and light greyish on the lesser wing-coverts. The feathers of the upper back have pale tips. Lower back and rump are both blue-grey. Chin, throat and breast light greyish brown; under and upper tail-coverts white. Flanks and thighs barred with grey; tail ash-grey, edged and tipped with white. Belly dirty white, with dark bars and blotches. Bill and legs flesh-colour, the former white at the tip; irides brown. Length, about 34 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Somewhat darker than the adult, and lack the dark markings on the abdomen.



Grey Lag Goose

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Breeds in Sutherland, Ross and Caithness, some of the Inner Hebrides, and more commonly in the Outer Hebrides. In Scotland more general in winter, but at this season rare on the east coast of England, and irregular and local in the south and west. To Ireland it is a local winter visitor.

**Habits.**—Lonely swamps and moorland bogs form the summer haunts of the Grey Lag. In winter this bird resorts to the coast in large numbers, and at all times of the year is more or less gregarious, but seldom associates with other species, although tame and wild birds will feed in company on the stubbles. The flocks of our resident Grey Lags are augmented in winter by arrivals from the Continent, which usually begin to come in about the end of September, departing March or April. This Goose is apparently life-paired, the birds returning to their nesting grounds early in spring, and when incubation has commenced, the gander jealously guards the nest, and is ever on the alert, driving off any venturesome bird or mammal.

**Food.**—Grass, grain, roots and shoots of water-plants.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst long heather, less frequently concealed by coarse grass or rushes. Often placed on islands. *Materials.* Heather, dry grass, rushes and leaves, lined with feathers and down. Sometimes very little material is used, the scrape being merely lined with down.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6, occasionally as many as 8. Creamy or dull yellowish white. *Size.* About  $3\cdot4 \times 2\cdot35$  inches. *Time.* April and May.

**Note.**—A deep *argh*, very like that of the domestic goose.

## WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

*Anser albifrons*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts dark greyish brown, the feathers of the back having pale edgings. Fore-breast ash-grey; lower breast white, with irregular patches of dark brown or black. Flanks dark brown; abdomen and upper and under tail-coverts white. A broad band of white, edged with black, surrounds the base of the orange bill, the nail of which is white. Legs orange-yellow; irides brown. Length, about 27 inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished from other "Grey Geese" by the white frontal band and dark flanks. *Young.* Bill dark grey, tinged with pink. The dark bars on the breast are but slightly developed or entirely wanting. Less white on the forehead.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Most regular, and often plentiful, on the west coasts of Great Britain. Scarce on most parts of the east coast, but sometimes numerous on the south coast. Regular and often abundant on bogs in all four provinces of Ireland.

**Habits.**—The White-fronted Goose arrives in October, remaining until late in April and sometimes lingering until May. Its usual haunts are on the coast, but the bird is not infrequent on inland marshes.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the Grey Lag Goose.

**Note.**—Not unlike that of the preceding species.

## BEAN-GOOSE

*Anser fabalis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts greyish brown, the shoulders darker than the rest of the plumage; tail-coverts white. The wings and scapulars are more noticeably barred than those of the Grey Lag Goose, and the upper parts are darker. Lower back dark brown, as is also the rump, except on the sides, where it is white. Throat, breast and flanks pale brown, the latter barred with greyish white; rest of

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

under parts greyish white. Bill black at the tip and base, remainder orange, as are also the legs; irides dark brown. Length, about 34 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Darker than the adult, with a tinge of rufous on the neck.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Widely distributed in Great Britain and Ireland, but not numerous except locally. Usually of more frequent occurrence on the west than on the east coasts of Great Britain. Very rare in extreme north of the mainland of Scotland, as it is also in the south of Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Bean-Goose reaches us exceptionally in September, but the majority of birds arrive in October, remaining until March or April, some lingering until May. This species closely resembles the Pink-footed Goose in appearance and habits, but is a considerably larger bird, this distinction being an aid to correct identification when the two geese can be compared.

**Food.**—Corn, grass and other vegetable matter.

**Note.**—Very similar to that of the Pink-footed Goose.

## PINK-FOOTED GOOSE

*Anser brachyrhynchus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck and rump brown. Upper parts greyish brown, the feathers having pale tips. The wings and scapulars are darker than the rest of the upper parts. Breast reddish brown, the pale edges to the feathers giving a barred appearance. Belly white, shaded with grey. Base of bill black on the upper portion, nail black, remainder pink. Legs pink; irides dark brown. Length, about 28 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Duller. There is less pink on the beak.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Most abundant on the east coast of Great Britain, rarer on the south and west coasts, although locally numerous on the west side.

## BARNACLE-GOOSE

Scarce in the extreme north of Scotland and a very rare wanderer to Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Pink-footed Goose arrives from about the middle of September to mid-October, the departure taking place about the end of April, although some birds leave our shores in March and others linger until May. This species is shy and wary, and when feeding on stubble or grassland the birds are difficult to approach, any suspicion of danger causing the flocks to seek safety in more sheltered quarters. At night Pink-footed Geese congregate on dry sand-flats, which they leave at dawn and proceed to their feeding grounds. This species, in common with other members of the group, is gregarious, and the flocks sometimes reach huge proportions.

**Food.**—Grass shoots, grain, blades of wheat and aquatic plants.

**Note.**—A loud metallic *honk-honk*

## BARNACLE-GOOSE

*Branta leucopsis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head white, except the crown, which is black, as are also the nape, neck and fore-breast. A black bar extends from the base of the bill to the eye. Upper back black, rest of upper parts lavender-grey, more or less barred with black and white. Upper breast black, lower portion greyish white; flanks white, barred with grey. Upper tail-coverts white. Bill and legs black; irides dark brown. Length, about 26 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* The white on the head is suffused with brown, and the parts which are black in the adult are brown in young birds.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Most abundant in the Outer and in some of the Inner Hebrides, and in the Solway area. More numerous generally on the west coasts of Great Britain than on the east side and south coast. It occurs

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

in both the Orkneys and Shetlands. Regular visitor to the north coast of Ireland, but very scarce in the southern half of the country.

**Habits.**—About the end of September the Barnacle-Goose commences to arrive on our shores, although it may occasionally be observed earlier. It is seldom abundant until towards the close of October. The flocks depart in March or April, but a few birds sometimes remain until May. The Barnacle is gregarious, but does not usually occur in such large numbers as the Brent Goose, and is not so partial to salt water, sometimes seeking its food on grassy islands or on cultivated land near the coast.

**Food.**—Grass, aquatic weeds, insects and crustaceans.

**Notes.**—Described as a coughing grunt and a sharp yelping cry.

### BRENT GOOSE

*Branta bernicla*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck and fore-breast black. There is a white patch on each side of the neck. Lower breast and flanks greyish brown, as is also the back. Abdomen and tail-coverts white, the dark tail being almost concealed by the coverts. Primaries dark greyish brown. Bill and legs nearly black; irides dark brown. Length, about 22 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Browner in coloration. The neck patches are lacking or scarcely noticeable, and the fore-breast is grey.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Most numerous and regular on the east coast of Scotland, on the east and south coasts of England and in Ireland. It is scarce and rather irregular on most parts of the west coasts of Great Britain. Very rare inland.

**Habits.**—The Brent usually arrives in October, although a few birds appear in September. The return movement takes place in March or April, stragglers remaining until May.

## CANADA GOOSE

This species keeps much more to the sea than the "Grey Geese," from which it is readily distinguished by its sooty appearance. The Brent Goose is at all times gregarious, and on parts of the coast where the bird is numerous, the flocks are often very large.

**Food.**—Maritime weeds, grass stalks and other vegetable matter; also molluscs and worms.

**Note.**—A loud metallic double call.

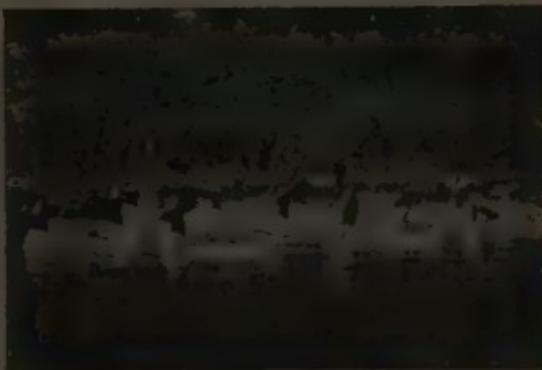
## CANADA GOOSE

*Branca canadensis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck black, sides of face white. Upper parts brown, the feathers showing pale margins. The flanks are pale brown and are faintly barred. The under parts are white, with faint barring on the abdomen. Bill and legs black; irides brown. Length, about 42 inches. *Sexes alike.*

**Distribution.**—Introduced more than two hundred years ago. At the present time breeds freely in a practically wild state in Norfolk, Cheshire, Lancashire, Surrey and other parts. Birds which have reached the Hebrides may have been genuine migrants from overseas.

**Habits.**—The Canada Goose frequents lakes, meres and broads, on the margins of which many nest in a more or less wild state. In winter the birds wander a good deal, and at dusk flocks may be observed passing from one sheet of water



Canada Geese

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

to another. The bird is at all times gregarious, but especially so in winter.

**Food.**—Grass shoots, and no doubt other vegetable substances.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Amongst rushes or other water-plants on the margins of lakes or upon islets. *Materials.* Reeds and other aquatic plants, lined with down.

**Eggs.**—4 to 7, according to Mr. T. A. Coward. Dull white. *Size.* About 3·65 × 2·3 inches. *Time.* April.

**Note.**—Honk, honk.

### SHELD-DUCK

*Tadorna tadorna*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck black, with a metallic green sheen. Rest of plumage mostly white, relieved by a broad black band passing down the centre of the breast,

a broad chestnut band encircling the body from the base of the neck, and black primaries and scapulars. The undertail-coverts are edged with chestnut and the tail tipped with black. The speculum is chestnut and green. Bill bright red; legs pink; irides brown. Length, about 25 inches. *Female.*

Sheld-Duck, with Young

Slightly duller and lacks the scarlet knob at the base of the bill. *Young.* Head and neck greyish black; bill flesh-colour. The chestnut band around the body and the black breast-band are lacking.

## *SHELD-DUCK*

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Generally distributed in suitable localities on the coasts throughout the British Isles. In some parts nests inland at considerable distances from the sea. Very abundant in some districts of Wales and Scotland, and locally numerous elsewhere.

**Habits.**—The Sheld-Duck is a bird of the sand-dunes, sandy beaches and estuaries, although sometimes breeding inland around lochs and other sheets of water. This species often nests in colonies, sometimes in considerable numbers, and although most of the breeding haunts are along low-lying sandy coasts, in some localities the Sheld-Duck nests on comparatively high ground. Soon after the young are hatched they are conducted by their parents to the water, and are carefully guarded by both male and female. The Sheld-Duck walks with ease, in which respect it more closely resembles a goose than a duck. In autumn our resident birds are joined by immigrants, and at this season large flocks are not unusual.

**Food.**—Marine weeds, molluscs, crustaceans, sand-hoppers and worms.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a rabbit's burrow, at the end of a tunnel in the sand excavated by the bird, or in a hole under rocks. Occasionally amongst dense undergrowth. The nest is sometimes 10 or 12 feet from the mouth of the burrow, at other times much less. *Materials.* Dead grasses, leaves and moss, liberally lined with the bird's own down of a pearly grey colour.

**Eggs.**—7 to 12, occasionally more. Creamy white. *Size.* About  $2\cdot7 \times 1\cdot9$  inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Male.* A deep *korr-korr*. *Female.* A loud quack. In the pairing season the male is said to utter a rapidly repeated whistle or trill.

## MALLARD

*Anas platyrhyncha*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and upper part of neck rich glossy green, below which is a narrow collar of white. Breast dark chestnut; scapulars and flank feathers grey; lower breast, belly and vent greyish white. Back brown; wings ash-brown; speculum metallic steel-blue, bounded on either side by a narrow bar of black and white. Rump, upper and under tail-coverts rich velvety black, as are also the four central tail feathers, which are curled upwards. The rest of the tail feathers are greyish, edged with white. Bill yellowish green; irides brown; legs orange. Length, about 23 inches. In eclipse plumage the drake resembles the duck, but the crown, back and rump are dusky, the wing-coverts



Mallard (Female)

grey, and the belly and under tail-coverts thickly spotted.

*Female.* Dark brown, mottled with buff. Coloration of speculum as in male, and when this is visible it distinguishes the duck from the female Gadwall, Shoveller and Pintail. Bill olive. Length, about 21 inches. *Young.* Resemble the adult female, but young males are darker on the upper parts.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Generally distributed and common throughout the British Isles.

**Habits.**—The Mallard, or Wild Duck, is abundant in all suitable localities, its numbers being much augmented in winter by migrants from overseas. Some of our nesting birds, however, leave our islands for more southern regions in autumn. The winter visitors commence to arrive in

## GADWALL

September, and continue to reach us until early November, returning during March. The Mallard is not fastidious in its choice of a haunt, Highland lochs, Lowland waters, marshes, rivers, and in winter coastal areas, forming congenial resorts. The bird appears equally at home on small or large sheets of water. The Mallard is gregarious at all seasons, and even during the incubation period the drakes gather into small parties, and the winter flocks are sometimes enormous.

**Food.**—Aquatic insects, worms, small frogs, grain, leaves and seeds of water-plants and small fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst rushes, long grass, heather or other vegetation. In marshes, on boggy commons, in hedge bottoms or woods. Sometimes in hollow trees, in bean, straw or faggot stacks, in the old nest of a Crow or in a deserted squirrel's drey, and in other elevated situations. Usually near water, but sometimes at a considerable distance from it. *Materials.* Dry grass, bracken and dead leaves, lined with dark brown down, which has light centres and is slightly tipped with white.

**Eggs.**—8 to 14, exceptionally as many as 16. Greenish white, cream or pale bluish green. *Size.* About  $2\cdot3 \times 1\cdot6$  inches. *Time.* February to June, occasionally much later.

**Note.**—*Quack.* Harsh and low in the case of the male, louder and of a higher pitch when uttered by the female.

## GADWALL

*Anas strepera*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck pale brown, mottled with darker brown. Back greyish brown, marked with curved lines of grey; upper and under tail-coverts black. Wing-coverts chestnut; speculum white on inner half, black on outer; primaries and tail feathers brown. Breast dark greyish brown, marked with short curving lines of a lighter shade; abdomen and flanks whitish, the latter pencilled with grey. Bill lead-colour; irides hazel; legs dull orange.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Length, about 21 inches. In eclipse plumage the drake closely resembles the duck, but retains the chestnut on the

wings. *Female.* Browner in colour and more boldly marked. Lacks the chestnut patch on the wing. In general appearance resembles the female Mallard, but the black and white speculum is a mark of distinction. *Young.* Resemble the adult female, but the males sometimes show a little chestnut on the wing-coverts at an early age.

**Distribution.** — Resident and winter

visitor. Nests fairly commonly in Norfolk (where pinioned stock was originally induced to breed), also in Suffolk. Has bred on Loch Leven since 1909, and more recently in Ross, Sutherland, Caithness and Fife. Elsewhere mainly a scarce and irregular winter visitor, but fairly common in some parts on the west side of Scotland.

**Habits.** — As a visitor from the Continent, the Gadwall usually reaches us in September and October, but its occurrence towards the end of August is not very unusual. Although sometimes observed at sea, the Gadwall is mainly a fresh-water species, and partial to secluded lakes or sluggish rivers affording sufficient cover. It is a shy bird, and although sometimes noticed on inland waters far from the coast, appears to prefer those near the sea, to which it can easily retreat if much disturbed. The Gadwall is largely a nocturnal feeder, in this respect resembling the Mallard.



Nest of Gadwall

## TEAL

**Food.**—Aquatic insects and their larvæ, worms, small frogs, water-plants.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground, concealed by rushes, coarse grass or other vegetation. Usually in a dry spot, but not far from water. *Materials.* Dead grass or sedges, lined with down. The latter is dark brownish grey in colour, tipped with greyish white.

**Eggs.**—8 to 13. Buffish white. *Size.* About  $2\cdot1 \times 1\cdot5$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Note.**—A low quacking sound.

## TEAL

*Anas crecca*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck bright chestnut, relieved by a metallic green band passing from the eye to the neck, and bounded on either side by a narrow line of buff which extends forward towards the bill. Back and flanks white, finely pencilled with grey, the former brown on the lower portion. Breast and under parts white, the former spotted with black. On the wing is a long buff line, and below this the feathers are black; speculum black and metallic green; primaries and tail feathers brown. On the vent is a triangular patch of buff, edged with black. Bill nearly black; irides brown; legs greyish brown. Length, about 15 inches. In eclipse dress



Photo. H. Morrey Salmon  
Teal (Male)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

the male approaches the duck in appearance, but the abdomen is heavily spotted and the upper parts are darker. *Female.* Mottled brown, lighter on the under parts. Not unlike the female Mallard, but very much smaller, and apart from this, distinguished by the green speculum. *Young.* Resemble female, but the speculum is duller and the upper parts dusky.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Nests in most parts of England, but more numerously in the eastern and northern counties than in the south and midlands. Breeds commonly in Wales, and abundantly in Scotland, both on the mainland and islands, including some of the Outer Hebrides. In Ireland it is a generally distributed breeding bird in limited numbers.

**Habits.**—During the nesting season, the favourite haunts of the Teal are mountain swamps, boggy commons or heaths, reed-fringed lakes and pools surrounded by marshland, or sluggish streams. In autumn immigrants reach us in large numbers, arriving from August to October, and these haunt the sea and estuaries for a time before passing inland. Should severe weather ensue, however, the birds again resort to the coast. The return passage commences in March. The Teal feeds both by day and night, and when not much molested is by no means a shy species. If approached with caution it is slower to rise than the more wary Mallard, but when surprised will take wing with the greatest suddenness.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, also aquatic vegetation.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst heather, coarse grass, rushes or other herbage. Sometimes sheltered by a low bush. *Materials.* Dead leaves, grasses and rushes, lined with blackish brown down, showing light centres, but not whitish tips, as in the case of the Garganey.

**Eggs.**—8 to 10. Pale creamy white, sometimes tinged faintly with green. *Size.* About  $1\cdot7 \times 1\cdot35$  inches. *Time.* April to June.

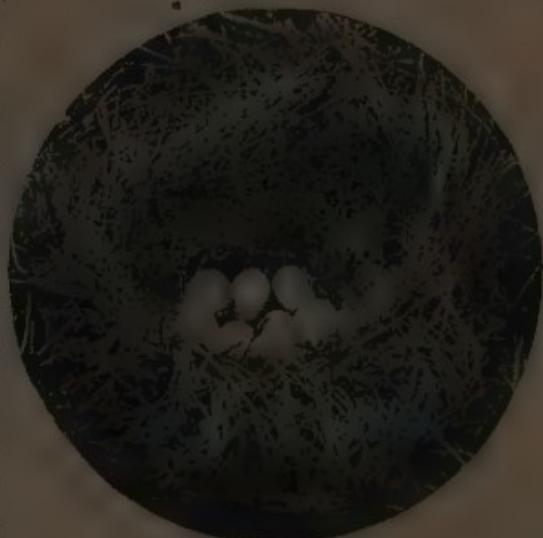
**Notes.**—*Call.* A short soft whistle. *Alarm note.* *Knake.*

## GARGANEY

*Anas querquedula*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown dark brown; cheeks reddish brown, speckled with white; chin black. A broad white streak passes from the eye down the sides of the neck. Back dark brown, the feathers margined with light brown. Neck and breast brown, with black barring; flanks greyish white, vermiculated with dark grey; abdomen white, freckled with grey. Wing-coverts bluish grey, the elongated scapulars black and white. Speculum metallic green, bordered with white on either side. Primaries brownish black; under tail-coverts buff, spotted with black. Bill black; legs greyish brown; irides hazel. Length, about 16 inches. In eclipse dress the male resembles the duck, but there is no change in the speculum or blue coloration of the wings. *Female.* Head brown, with dark lines and spots; eye-stripe buff. Back brown, the feathers having pale edges, wing-coverts greyish brown; speculum duller than that of male. Chin buffish white; under parts greyish white, marked with brown. Lighter in appearance than the female Teal. *Young.* Resemble the adult female.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and an uncommon passage-migrant. Breeds regularly in small numbers in Norfolk, Suffolk and Kent. Has nested occasionally in other counties of England as far north as Durham and Yorkshire. The southern and eastern counties of England have furnished most



Nest of Garganey

of the breeding records, but the Garganey has been found nesting as far west as Somerset. Elsewhere in Great Britain and Ireland irregular and unusual during the spring passage movement, rarely seen in autumn, and most exceptionally a winter visitor.

**Habits.**—The Garganey, or Summer Teal, usually arrives early in April, although sometimes in March, departing in August or early September. Apart from the fact that this species is chiefly a summer visitor, its habits in many respects resemble those of the Teal. It is, however, swifter on the wing, but is less agile in turning, although it rises from the water with great speed. The Garganey retains the eclipse plumage longer than any other surface-feeding duck, and according to Mr. J. G. Millais, the breeding plumage is not fully acquired until December or even later.

**Food.**—Aquatic insects, small fish, water-weeds and small molluses.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst rushes or other rank herbage, and usually in marshes. *Materials.* Rushes, dry grass or other vegetable matter, lined with down of a blackish brown colour, tipped with pale buff.

**Eggs.**—6 to 13. Creamy white, very similar to those of the Teal. *Size.* About 1·8 × 1·35 inches. *Time.* April and May.

**Notes.**—A loud *knack*. The male has a rattle-like note in spring.

## WIDGEON

*Anas penelope*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown cream-colour, rest of head chestnut-red; throat nearly black. There are spots of metallic green on the sides of the head and neck, and a mark of the same colour passes backward from the eye. Back and scapulars greyish white, barred with irregular black lines.

## WIDGEON

Wing-coverts white, tipped with black; speculum black and metallic green; primaries dusky brown. Fore-breast pinkish, breast and abdomen white; flanks grey, pencilled with black. Tail feathers black, under tail-coverts velvety black. Bill bluish grey, tipped with black; legs lead-colour; irides dark brown. Length, about 18 inches. The eclipse summer dress of the male is not unlike the duck's plumage, most of the distinctive colours being lost at this period.

**Female.** Head and neck pale reddish brown, speckled with black. Upper parts dark brown, the feathers margined with light reddish brown. Breast pale brown; flanks rufous; belly nearly white. Speculum green, bordered with white. Bill darker than that of male. **Young.** Closely resemble the female.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Breeds commonly in the north of Scotland, especially in Sutherland, less numerously in Caithness, Ross, Cromarty, Inverness, Perth and Kincardine. It has in recent years extended its breeding range southwards. Birds have nested in England and Wales, but it is doubtful whether these were of truly wild origin. Has been known to breed in the Orkneys and Shetlands.

**Habits.**—Considerable numbers of Widgeon are resident, but the bird is most abundant as a winter visitor and passage-migrant. It occurs on all our coasts in winter, and although



Widgeon (Female)

the bird must be regarded as a salt-water duck, quite a large number occur, and not infrequently, on inland waters. As winter visitors Widgeon commence to arrive in August, but are not often numerous until about the middle of October, and the majority move northwards in February and March. Passage-migrants may be observed during April and May, or even in early June. This duck is gregarious in winter, and sometimes occurs in enormous numbers, showing a marked preference for estuaries.

**Food.**—Sea-grass, molluscs, crustaceans and fresh-water weeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground under a bush or concealed by tall heather, rushes, long grass or other coarse herbage. Near lochs, tarns, swamps or rivers. *Materials.* Dry grass, moss and leaves, mixed with dark sooty brown down, showing light centres.

**Eggs.**—6 to 10. Creamy white. *Size.* About  $2\cdot2 \times 1\cdot5$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—A musical whistle, sounding like *whee-ooo*. This note is confined to the male. The duck's note of alarm is a harsh quack.

## PINTAIL

*Anas acuta*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head dark brown; hind-neck nearly black, front of neck white. Back and flanks greyish white, vermiculated with blackish. The long pointed secondaries are black, margined with buff; primaries greyish brown; speculum dark green, bounded by black, white and buff. Under parts white, with the exception of a buff patch on either side of the abdomen and the black under tail-coverts. The white of the under surface is extended up the sides of the neck to the head, forming a narrow band. The black central tail feathers are elongated and pointed, remainder dark

## PINTAIL

brown, edged with white. Bill black in centre, bluish grey at sides; legs slaty grey; irides brown. Length, about 28 inches. In eclipse dress the drake is dusky brown, closely resembling the duck, but more spotted below. The colours of the speculum are retained. *Female.* Upper parts brown, mottled with buff, the head and hind-neck streaked with blackish. Under surface white, the flanks showing bold brown markings and the fore-neck marked with the same colour. Wing crossed by two white bars. The pointed tail much shorter than that of male. Bill margined with yellow. *Young.* Resemble the female, but the males are greyish on the head and neck.



Nest of Pintail

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Has become established as a breeding species in Scotland within recent years. A good many pairs nest at Loch Leven, also in the Orkneys. The bird has also nested in the Hebrides and Shetlands, and in several other localities. In winter a regular but not very numerous visitor to most of our coasts.

**Habits.**—Immigrants arrive on the coast in late August or during September, but many birds do not reach us until October. The return movement is noticeable in March and April. During the winter the Pintail is mainly a salt-water duck, although also found on inland waters, especially those near the coast. It seldom occurs in large flocks, two or three to twenty or thirty birds being the general rule. The Pin-

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

tail is a particularly wary bird, and consequently feeds mostly at night. When swimming, this duck floats high on the water, often with the tail considerably raised.

**Food.**—Insects, water-weeds, molluscs, crustaceans and grain.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground, usually in a dry place, and under a low bush or amongst grass, rushes or other herbage. Near ponds, lakes or inlets from the sea. *Materials.* Reeds, dry grasses or other vegetation, lined with sooty brown down, which has light centres

**Eggs.**—6 to 10. Buffish green or cream-colour. *Size* About  $2\cdot15 \times 1\cdot55$  inches. *Time.* May.

**Notes.**—A soft quack. The male has a low whistle

### SHOVELLER

*Spatula clypeata*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and upper neck dark metallic green, below which is a broad expanse of white extending to the upper breast. Hind-scapulars pale blue, succeeded by black feathers with broad white shaft-streaks; speculum glossy green; primaries brownish black. Lower breast and abdomen rich chestnut; under tail-coverts black; vent white. Back blackish brown, the feathers edged with a lighter shade. Tail brownish black, margined with white. Bill leaden grey, much broadened towards the tip, presenting a spoon-like appearance. Irides yellow; legs reddish orange. Length, about 20 inches. In eclipse plumage the drake closely resembles the duck, but the blue shoulder is retained, and the lower breast and the abdomen show a chestnut tinge. *Female.* Resembles the female Mallard in general appearance, but the broad bill and light blue wing-coverts are distinctive. *Young.* Resemble the adult female.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Increasing as a resident species, and breeds, or has nested, in most of the southern and eastern counties

## *SHOVELLER*

of England, as well as in many parts of the north and Midlands. Has also bred in Somerset and Devon. Nests much more rarely in Wales, but not uncommonly in some parts of Scotland, including the Outer Hebrides and Orkneys. Increasing in Ireland, and breeds in all four provinces.

**Habits.**—During the winter months the Shoveller is more numerous and more generally distributed. Our resident birds are joined in autumn by immigrants from the Continent, which commence to arrive in September. Many birds travel through our islands during the passage movements in spring and autumn, and the Shoveller is most abundant with us during those seasons. This species is strictly a fresh-water duck, only resorting to the sea during very severe weather.

It is very partial to boggy ground or marshlands, where there are pools of open water, and also frequents river backwaters overgrown with reeds and other water-plants.

**Food.**—Small crustaceans, aquatic insects, water-plants and grass shoots.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground, frequently in a marsh, sometimes on swampy moorlands. Concealed by grass, rushes or heather. Sometimes near water, but at other times at a considerable distance from it. *Materials.* Dry grass or sedges, lined with dark brownish down, lighter in the centre, and tipped with white.



Photo : H. Marrey Salmon  
**Shoveller (Male)**

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**Eggs.**—7 to 12. Buffish white, tinged with green. **Size.** About 2·0 × 1·5 inches. **Time.** April and May.

**Notes.**—Quack or puck-puck.

### POCHARD

*Nyroca ferina*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and upper part of neck chestnut, below which is a band of black, broadening on the breast. Upper part of back grey, lower portion black, as are also the upper and under tail-coverts. Scapulars and under parts

white, delicately pencilled with grey. Wing-coverts brownish grey; secondaries and primaries pale grey, the latter shading to dusky brown. Tail feathers dusky brown, mottled with grey. Bill black, banded with grey; irides red; legs are leaden grey. Length, about 19 inches. In eclipse plumage the male is browner on the head and neck, and the breast is dark grey, barred with a darker

Nest of Pochard

tint of the same colour. *Female.* Head and neck dull reddish brown, darker on the crown and hind-neck. Chin and cheeks greyish white; breast reddish brown. Under parts dull brownish white; flanks dark brown. Upper parts reddish brown, mottled with grey. Grey area on bill smaller than in male. *Young.* Like the female, but browner on the under surface.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Has in-

## **POCHARD**

creased much as a breeding species during recent years. Breeds, or has nested, in most of the counties along the east coast of England, in many of the southern counties, in some parts of the Midlands, and in Shropshire, Lancashire and Merioneth. Nests in most parts of Scotland, excluding the Shetlands, but is chiefly a winter visitor to the Outer Hebrides. It has been recorded as breeding in several counties in Ireland, and young were identified in Co. Monaghan in 1907. More widely distributed in the British Isles in winter.

**Habits.**—The winter visitors usually arrive from mid-September to mid-November, and at this season the birds gather in flocks, sometimes of considerable size, resorting to lakes and ponds. The Pochard is seldom seen at sea, except during severe weather. The appearance of this duck as early as August in localities outside its breeding areas may be due to local movements of our resident birds. The winter flocks vary considerably in size from season to season, and as regards localities the bird is decidedly irregular, sometimes being abundant, and at other times scarce in any chosen spot. The Pochard feeds chiefly at night, and during the day often remains in closely bunched flocks well out towards the centre of a lake or pond, the birds either sleeping or idly preening their plumage.

**Food.**—Water-plants, aquatic insects, small fish and molluscs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On margins of lakes. Usually in a wet or moist situation. Sometimes in dead flags in shallow water, at other times in rushes or other water-plants. *Materials.* Dead rushes, flags or reeds, sometimes coarse grass. Lined with down of a dark greyish brown colour, with light centres

**Eggs.**—6 to 10, sometimes more. Greenish grey or greenish drab. *Size.* About  $2\cdot35 \times 1\cdot7$  inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Note.**—A harsh *kurr, kurr, kurr.*

## TUFTED DUCK

*Nyroca fuligula*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck glossy purplish black, the feathers at the back of the head elongated, forming a pendant crest. Remainder of upper parts dull black, the secondaries crossed by a white bar. Breast, belly and flanks

white; under tail-coverts black. Bill bluish grey, tipped with black; legs slate-grey; irides golden yellow. Length, about 17 inches. Males in eclipse dress closely resemble the females. *Female.* Upper parts dusky brown; breast dull brownish white; flanks dark brown, marked with irregular grey lines. Crest only slightly developed. *Young.*

Resemble female, but lack the crest. Many

immature birds show a whitish patch at the base of the bill.

**Distribution.**—Resident, also a passage-migrant and a winter visitor. Breeds in most counties of England, also in Anglesey. Nests commonly in the south and east of Scotland, also in the Orkneys and Inner and Outer Hebrides. In Ireland breeds in many parts in all four provinces. The bird is extending its range and increasing as a nesting species in the British Isles.

**Habits.**—The Tufted Duck is a fresh-water species, frequenting lakes, tarns, meres and other large sheets of water. Its numbers are greatly increased in autumn by



Photo: G. C. S. Ingram

Tufted Duck (Male)

## SCAUP DUCK

visitors from the Continent, and in winter it becomes more generally distributed, frequenting many sheets of water from which it is absent or on which it only occurs occasionally at other seasons. The birds from overseas begin to arrive in September, the majority reaching us in October. The return passage extends from March to mid-May. As early as August some local movement is apparent. During the daytime Tufted Ducks frequently sleep on the water, becoming active towards evening, when they proceed to their feeding grounds. The winter flocks sometimes reach considerable proportions, and the birds often associate with Pochards on the water, usually separating when compelled to take wing. The Tufted Duck is by no means shy, and with caution may be approached quite closely, especially in such localities where its haunts adjoin a frequented path or roadway.

**Food.**—Mainly aquatic plants, also molluscs, insects and small fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Amongst rushes, coarse grass, heather or other herbage. Well concealed, and usually on the edge of a lake or on an islet. Sometimes concealed by a bush.

*Materials.* Rushes, sedges, reeds and dry grass, lined with the bird's own down, which is greyish black, and rather darker than that of the Pochard, and the dusky white centres are less distinct.

**Eggs.**—8 to 10, sometimes more. Pale greenish or olive brown. **Size.** About 2·3 × 1·6 inches. **Time.** May and June.

**Note.**—*Currugh.*

## SCAUP DUCK

*Nyroca marila*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck, breast and fore-part of back black, with a green gloss. Mantle white, with grey vermiculations. Under parts and flanks white; lower back and under tail-coverts black. Wings dusky brown and

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

black, with a conspicuous white bar. Bill greyish blue; irides yellow; legs lead-colour. Length, about 19 inches. When in eclipse plumage the drake more or less resembles the duck. *Female.* Head, neck, breast and upper parts dark brown, marked with grey on the back and scapulars. Wings as in male. Flanks brown, pencilled with grey; under parts white, tinged with brown. There is a broad band of white round the base of the bill, which is a distinctive feature, being much more pronounced than in the immature Tufted Duck. *Young.* Resemble the female, but the white facial patch is tinged with brown.

**Distribution.**—Chiefly a winter visitor and a bird of passage, but a few pairs sometimes remain to nest. Recorded nesting in Outer Hebrides, 1897–1900, 1902, 1906, 1910 and 1913, in Sutherland in 1899 and in Orkney in 1915.

**Habits.**—During the winter the Scaup is distributed around all our coasts, and occasionally frequents inland waters. It is a gregarious species, and sometimes the flocks contain hundreds of birds. The first arrivals usually appear in September, but the greatest influx generally occurs in October. Some birds remain until late April or even early May.

**Food.**—Worms, mussels, sea-grass and small crabs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a depression in the ground, and close to water. Often on an island. Concealed by rushes, grass or other vegetation. *Materials.* A little grass and a few dry stalks, lined with down of a sooty brown hue, with indistinct light centres.

**Eggs.**—8 to 11. Very similar to those of the Pochard, but usually darker. *Size.* About 2·43 × 1·70 inches. *Time.* May or June.

**Note.**—A grating *kurr, kurr.*

## GOLDEN EYE

*Bucephala clangula*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and upper part of neck black, with a green gloss. There is a large oval white spot at the base of the bill and below the eye, by which the bird may be easily recognized. Back and tail-coverts black: scapulars white, the outermost margined with black. On the black wings there is a large area of white, crossed by a black bar. Lower neck and under parts white. Bill bluish black; irides golden; legs yellow; webs black. Length, about 18½ inches. *Female.* Head and upper part of neck dark brown. There is no white patch at the base of the bill. Back, lower neck, flanks and fore-breast grey, with dark mottlings. Under parts white. There is a conspicuous white area on the wings as in the male. Length, about 16 inches. *Young.* Resemble the female. Young brown-headed males often show traces of the white spot at the base of the bill before they acquire the plumage of the fully adult bird.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor and passage-migrant. Generally distributed off our coasts, also occurring on inland waters.

**Habits.**—The Goldeneye usually commences to arrive towards the end of September, although sometimes earlier, but the majority do not reach us until October, and the movement is continued into November. The departure takes place in late March or early April, but some birds remain until May or even early June. The bird has frequently been observed in Scotland in summer, but there is no proof of breeding. Gregarious in habits, the Goldeneye is sometimes seen in hundreds in coastal areas, and on lakes and rivers small parties are not infrequent. The bird is an expert diver, and will remain submerged for twenty seconds or more while feeding. If approached, it usually seeks safety in flight rather than in diving, and is at most times a wary fowl.

**Food.**—Vegetable matter, molluscs, crustaceans, aquatic insects and small fish.

**Note.**—A harsh grunting sound      Generally a silent bird.

## LONG-TAILED DUCK

*Clangula hyemalis*

**Description.**—*Male.* The plumage is variable according to season and age. In winter the head, neck, flanks and abdomen are white. There is a large oval patch of brown on the side of the neck. Scapulars pale grey and elongated. Breast white, except the fore-part, which is dark brown, as are also the upper parts. The long pointed central tail feathers are black, remainder white. Bill pink, the tip and base black. Legs lead-colour, irides brown, yellow or red. Length, about 22 inches. *Female.* Dark brown on the upper parts, with a greyish white ring round the neck. Under parts white, except the fore-breast, which is brown. Tail feathers and scapulars not elongated. Length, about 16 inches. *Young.* Resemble female, but the brown parts are pale and the white areas less distinct.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Regular on east coast of Great Britain, less common elsewhere. Rather irregular in Ireland, occurring chiefly on the north and west coasts. Appears to have nested occasionally in the Orkneys and Shetlands.

**Habits.**—The Long-tailed Duck is a marine species, sometimes occurring in considerable flocks off our coasts, but very rarely wandering inland. The birds commence to arrive about the end of September, the return migration lasting from March to April or even May. On the water, this handsome duck rides buoyantly, the long tail of the male being carried obliquely. The bird is an expert diver, and remains under water for forty seconds or more.

**Food.**—Marine mollusca and fry of various fish, also water-plants, and occasionally worms and insects.

**Notes.**—*Male.* A loud musical cry, which has been represented as *calloo*. *Female.* A low *wad* or *wack*.

## COMMON EIDER DUCK

*Somateria mollissima*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead, crown, lower back and a bar on either side of the bill extending backwards beyond the eye, black. Hind part of head greenish, as are also the ear-coverts. Rest of upper parts white. The white fore-breast is tinged with pinkish buff; the under parts black, with a patch of white on either side of the abdomen. Wing-quills are black; tail feathers are brownish black. Bill olive-green, pale yellow at the tip; legs dusky green; irides brown. Length, about 25 inches. In eclipse plumage the male is blacker than in winter dress, and is irregularly marked on back and scapulars. *Female.* Reddish brown, more or less streaked, mottled and barred with brownish black. There are two greyish white bars across the wing. *Young.* Resemble the female, except that the wing-bars are indistinct, and in the male the sides of the head are blackish.

**Distribution.**—Resident, also a winter visitor. Nests on the coast of Northumberland, on Holy Island and on the Farne Islands; also in the Orkneys and Shetlands, in the Inner and Outer Hebrides and on many parts of the coast of the Scottish mainland. In Ireland it breeds regularly in Donegal. During winter the Eider is uncommon on the west and south coasts of Great Britain, but regular on the east coast, being most numerous from Northumberland northwards. Rarely occurs in Ireland in winter.

**Habits.**—The Eider Duck is a strictly maritime species, and its occurrence inland at a distance from the sea is purely



Common Eider Duck (Female)

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accidental. In localities where the bird is unmolested it breeds in large colonies, and three or four nests are sometimes placed within an area of a few square yards. Where the Eider enjoys protection, as on the Farne Islands, it becomes remarkably tame, and brooding ducks will allow themselves to be stroked on the back without showing signs of alarm. During the winter Eider Ducks are markedly gregarious, and often occur in flocks of hundreds, but at all times of the year they are more or less sociable. This bird feeds by day, apparently spending the night on land.

**Food.**—Marine insects, small crustaceans, shell-fish, crabs, and occasionally small fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst heather or coarse grass, on a collection of seaweed, amongst rocks or on shingle. Sometimes well concealed, but often in quite an open situation. *Materials.* Coarse grass, heather and dry seaweed, lined with down of a pale greyish colour, with light centres.

**Eggs.**—Often only 4 or 5, but sometimes 8 or more. Pale greyish green, yellowish olive or bluish green. *Size.* About  $3\cdot0 \times 2\cdot0$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—A harsh *kr, kr, kr.* Love note of male, *ah-oo.*

### COMMON SCOTER

*Oidemia nigra*

**Description.**—*Male.* Plumage uniform glossy black. Bill lead-blue, yellow at the base. Knob at base of bill black, with a line of orange. Irides brown; legs black. Length, about 20 inches. *Female.* Sooty brown, greyish white on the cheeks and throat. The swelling at the base of the bill less pronounced. *Young.* Resemble female, but the under parts are white, with brown mottlings. When on the wing, Common Scoters are readily distinguished from the larger Velvet-Scoters by the absence of the white bar on the wings.

## COMMON SCOTER

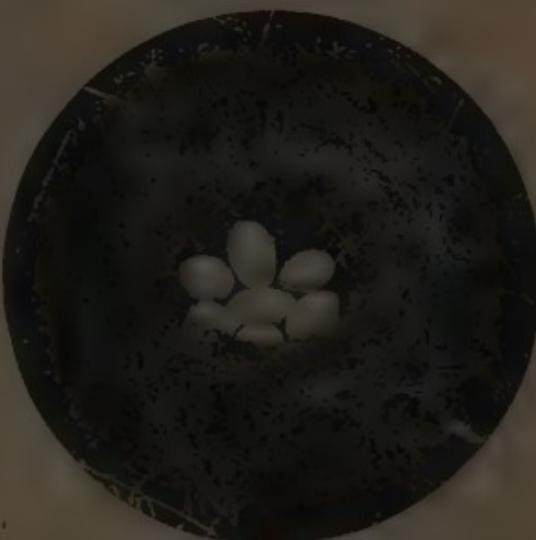
**Distribution.**—Chiefly a winter visitor and passage-migrant. Nests in Sutherland, Caithness, Cromarty and locally in parts of Ross and Inverness. It has also bred in Perth and the Shetlands. Nests in one or two localities in Ireland. As a winter visitor, numerous on the south and east coasts of Great Britain, less plentiful in the north and west, although common locally. Regular in northern half of Ireland, rare elsewhere.

**Habits.**—As a winter visitor the Black Duck arrives in September and in early October, sometimes even in August. The birds return in March

and April, some remaining until May, and flocks of immature birds may be seen off our coasts throughout the summer. The Common Scoter is much more numerous in winter than the Velvet-Scoter, and severe weather conditions in the north sometimes drive enormous numbers southward. The birds as a rule keep out at sea at some distance from the coast. During recent years, at all events, the Common Scoter has not infrequently been observed on inland waters.

**Food.**—Chiefly marine mollusca during winter. Sand-hoppers, worms, insects and small fish, have also been mentioned as amongst the items of the bird's diet. In summer fresh-water mussels are eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Placed upon the ground amongst heather or rushes, or sheltered by a low bush. On boggy



Nest of Common Scoter

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moorlands or on small islands, and generally not far from the sea. Sometimes at a considerable distance from water. **Materials.** Pieces of dead heather, rushes and dry grass, to which is added a plentiful supply of dark brownish down having indistinct white centres.

**Eggs.**—5 to 9, rarely up to 11. Pale buff or yellowish white. **Size.** About 2·5 x 1·78 inches. **Time.** May and June, but chiefly in the latter month.

**Note.**—A grating *kr-kr-kr*.

### VELVET-SCOTER

*Oidemia fusca*

**Description.**—*Male.* The plumage is uniform glossy black, with the exception of a small white patch behind and below the eye, and a white bar crossing the wing. The white wing-bar is sometimes concealed when the bird is on the water. Bill orange, basal knob and edge of upper mandible black. There is also a black line passing from the nostril to the nail. Legs orange red; irides greyish white. Length, about 21 inches. *Female.* Dark brown above, whitish on the breast. There is a whitish patch behind the eye and another at the base of the bill. Wing-bar less distinct than that of the drake. Bill and irides brown; legs paler than in male. *Young.* Resemble the female.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor in small numbers. On the east coast of Great Britain regular, and not unusual on the south coast, but uncommon on the west side. It is rare in the Shetlands, but common in the Orkneys. To Ireland a rare visitor.

**Habits.**—The Velvet-Scoter arrives in September and October, and although the majority depart in spring, some birds which are probably not fully mature, remain throughout the summer. This duck spends most of its time out at sea, keeping well away from the shore, although occasionally

## GOOSANDER

recorded from inland waters. It is gregarious and associates with the much more numerous Common Scoter, but separate flocks also occur, although these are not usually large.

**Food.**—Chiefly marine mollusca

**Note.**—A grunting sound.

## GOOSANDER

*Mergus merganser*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and upper neck rich glossy green. The feathers at the back of the head are elongated, but do not form a decided crest, as in the female. Upper back black; lower back, upper tail-coverts and tail feathers are ash-grey. Inter-scapulars and inner scapulars are black, the outer white. Wing-coverts and secondaries white, the latter narrowly edged with black; primaries nearly black. Lower part of neck and under parts white, the latter tinged with salmon-pink. Bill and irides red; legs orange-red. Length, about 26 inches. In eclipse plumage the male resembles the duck, but the back is darker and the wings whiter, and there is a dark ring round the neck. *Female.* Head and upper neck bright chestnut; throat white. Upper parts grey; under surface white, barred with grey on the flanks. There is a white patch across the wing. Length, about 24 inches. *Young.* Resemble the female, but the drakes are larger and have shorter crests.



Nest of Goosander

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Nests only in Scotland, but is increasing its range. Breeds in Sutherland, Ross, Argyll, Elgin, Banff, Aberdeen, Inverness, the Tay area and south-west Perth. Elsewhere occurs in winter on estuaries and inland waters, and is more frequent on the latter than the Red-breasted Merganser. Rather rare and irregular in southern England, and in Wales and Ireland, also in the Orkneys and Shetlands. Very rare in Outer Hebrides.

**Habits.**—As a winter visitor, the Goosander generally appears from about the end of September until late October, but exceptionally arrives in August. It is most numerous in winter on the east side of Great Britain. The immigrants leave us in April, a few sometimes remaining until May. The summer haunts of this handsome duck are amongst the wilder Highland lochs, where the bird finds a safe nesting retreat along their shores, on banks of streams or on small islands in the lochs. It is not a particularly sociable species even in winter, when it is perhaps seen singly or in pairs as frequently as in small flocks.

**Food.**—Chiefly fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In hollow trees, in cavities among boulders or under exposed roots of trees. Sometimes in holes in peat banks or under bushes. *Materials.* Dry grass or rootlets, lined with light grey down. When in trees, only down is used.

**Eggs.**—7 to 12. Creamy white. *Size.* About  $2\cdot7 \times 1\cdot85$  inches. *Time.* April and May.

**Notes.**—A guttural *karr* or a low plaintive whistle.

## RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

*Mergus serrator*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and upper neck glossy greenish black, the head feathers extended so as to form a double crest. The white of the lower neck is divided by a black line, which, passing down the hind-neck, joins the black of the upper back. Wing-coverts white, crossed by two black lines; primaries brownish black; at the joint of the wing is a patch of white feathers edged with black. Lower back grey; tail-quills brownish grey. Breast reddish brown, with blackish streaks; flanks pencilled with grey. Under parts white. Bill and irides bright red; legs deep orange. Length, about 24 inches. *The eclipse*

dress resembles the plumage of the immature male. *Female.* Somewhat smaller than male and the bill is duller. Resembles the female Goosander, but is a smaller and browner bird, and the throat is reddish. *Young.* Resemble the duck, except that the male has a shorter crest.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor, also a passage-migrant. Nests commonly in the north of Scotland, and as far south as Bute, Dumbarton, Argyll and the Tay area. Also breeds in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands, and in many districts in Ireland. A common winter visitor to our coasts, but infrequent on inland waters.

**Habits.**—The Red-breasted Merganser is far more of a



Red-breasted Merganser (Female)

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

salt-water duck than the Goosander, and during the winter this is especially noticeable. In the summer the Merganser often resorts to islands in sea lochs for nesting purposes. This bird is gregarious in winter, when it is sometimes observed in hundreds during severe weather, feeding chiefly in river estuaries by day and usually returning to the sea at night. Although the drake Merganser may sometimes be seen in the vicinity of the nest during the period of incubation, the care of the young devolves entirely upon the duck. In winter adult drakes separate from old females and immature birds.

**Food.**—Mainly fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground. Placed under bushes, in long heather or thick bramble, beneath banks or projecting ledges of rock, and occasionally in rabbits' holes. On islets, also on the shores of lakes. *Materials.* Dead grasses, roots or leaves, lined with light greyish brown down showing pale centres and tips.

**Eggs.**—6 to 12. Olive-grey to buffish grey. *Size.* About  $2\cdot6 \times 1\cdot7$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—In pairing time the drake utters a loud purring note and the duck a quack or croak. At other times the Merganser is usually a silent bird.

### SMEW

*Mergus albellus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Mainly white. From the base of the bill and extending behind the eye is a large black patch. There is a streak of black on the nape and two crescent-shaped lines of black on the sides of the breast. The white scapulars are edged with black, and the back is black above the scapulars. The black wings show a double white bar and the white flanks are pencilled with grey, wavy lines. Tail-quills, tail-coverts and rump grey. Bill and legs

## CORMORANT

bluish grey ; irides reddish brown. Length, about 17 inches.

**Female.** Head and neck chestnut. There is a black patch in front of the eye. Throat and cheeks white. Upper parts grey ; the wings like those of male. Under parts white. **Young.** Very similar to female, but without the black patch on the face. The wings and back are mottled.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Fairly common along the east coast of Great Britain and tolerably regular off the south coast, but scarcer on the west side. Uncommon visitor to Ireland. Occurs also on inland waters.

**Habits.**—The greater number of Smews which reach us in winter are immature birds, adults being very much rarer. The bird has been recorded exceptionally in August or even July, but as a rule does not appear before mid-September, and a considerable number arrive much later. The majority of birds depart in April or early May. The Smew is a shy bird and usually keeps well away from the shore, diving and swimming rapidly when alarmed.

**Food.**—Fish, small frogs and water-insects.

**Note.**—A guttural sound.

## CORMORANT

*Phalacrocorax carbo*

**Description.**—**Male.** General coloration blackish, glossed with metallic blue, except on the wing-coverts and scapulars, which are bronze-brown, the feathers edged with black, and the tail is slaty black without gloss. Sides of face and upper part of throat white. The crown, neck and lower throat are adorned with white filaments, and on the flanks is a large white patch. The head feathers are extended backwards so as to form a small crest. Bill horn-colour, yellowish at base. Irides green ; legs black. Length, about 36 inches. **Sexes alike.** In winter the white filaments and the thigh-patch are absent, as is also the crest. **Young.**

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Greyish brown, with a metallic green gloss on the back. The centre of the breast and abdomen often more or less white.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Generally distributed around the coasts of the British Isles, but as a nesting species is not usually found on the east coast of England south of Flamborough (although it nested in Norfolk in 1914 and 1916) or on the south coast eastwards from the Isle of Wight. In Ireland it does not breed on the east coast south of County Antrim, except at Wicklow Head and Lambay.



Cormorants

**Habits.**—This species is not so strictly a maritime bird as the Shag, often

visiting inland waters and sometimes nesting on islands in lakes, in trees or on cliffs at some distance from the sea. In autumn many birds move southwards, and in winter flocks of considerable proportions are not unusual. The Cormorant is an expert diver, and when on the water frequently sinks the body so that only the head and neck appear above the surface, and while in this position it will warily turn its head from side to side, seeking safety by diving should its suspicions be aroused.

**Food.**—Various fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On ledges of cliffs or on low rocky islands. Sometimes in trees. Breeds in colonies. *Materials.* Sticks, twigs, seaweed, coarse grass, according to locality. Sometimes the nest is decorated with flowering sprays of cliff-plants.

**Eggs.**—3 to 5 or 6. Pale blue, nearly covered with a thick chalky deposit. Elongated in shape. **Size.** About 2·6 x 1·62 inches. **Time.** April to July. Occasionally even March or August.

**Note.**—A harsh croak. Usually a very silent bird.

## SHAG

*Phalacrocorax graculus*

**Description.**—*Male.* The whole of the plumage is almost black, glossed with metallic green. Early in the year a short frontal crest, which is curved forward, makes its appearance, but is lost when incubation commences. Bill black, yellow at the gape; naked skin around the gape black, spotted with yellow. Legs black; irides emerald green. Length, about 27 inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished from the Cormorant by its smaller size and absence of the white thigh-patch. *Young.* Ash-brown above, glossed with green. Sides of face and under surface brown; throat white; abdomen dirty white. Browner beneath than the young of the Cormorant.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Nests commonly in the north and west of Scotland and in the Orkneys and Shetlands. It is uncommon on the east side of Scotland as a nesting species. Breeds on the south coast of England west of the Isle of Wight, occasionally at one or two places on the east coast, and fairly commonly on the shores of Wales and the Isle of



Shag

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Man. On the west coast of Ireland it breeds freely, also nests at a few spots on the east side.

**Habits.**—In winter the Shag becomes rather more generally distributed than in summer, and although much rarer inland than the Cormorant, occasionally appears in some numbers in autumn, and has been observed some miles from the coast in winter. During the breeding season it is entirely a marine bird, unlike its near relative the Cormorant. The flight is powerful and rapid, the bird making quick progress even when flying against a strong gale. The Shag, or Green Cormorant, is a voracious feeder, and will pursue fish under water with great speed. It is capable of descending to a considerable depth.

**Food.**—Fish of various kinds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In sea-caves, occasionally on a cliff ledge, in a rock crevice or among boulders near the shore. A gregarious nester. *Materials.* Seaweed and twigs, lined with grass.

**Eggs.**—2 to 5, occasionally 6. Undershell pale blue, but almost entirely concealed by a white chalky deposit. *Size.* About  $2\cdot45 \times 1\cdot5$  inches. *Time.* April to June, occasionally in March.

**Note.**—A guttural croak.

## GANNET

*Sula bassana*

**Description.**—*Male.* Uniform white, except for the dark brown wing-quills and a buff tinge to the head and neck. Bill pale greyish blue; skin around the eye slate-blue. Irides pale straw-colour; legs dark slate. Length, about 34 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Upper parts are greyish brown, spotted with white, especially on the head and neck. Tail black; wing-quills blackish. Throat like the upper parts, rest of under surface dirty white, mottled with grey. The plumage gradually becomes whiter as age advances.

## GANNET

**Distribution.**—Resident. Nests on the Bass Rock, Ailsa Craig, St. Kilda, Sulisgier (Outer Hebrides), also on Grasholme (Pembrokeshire) and in the Orkneys and Shetlands. In Ireland it breeds on the Bull Rock (Cork) and Little Skellig (Kerry).

**Habits.**—The Gannet, or Solan Goose, may be observed around our coasts at almost all seasons of the year, but the breeding stations are untenanted in autumn and winter, when a general southward movement takes place. Some birds doubtless leave our area altogether in winter, while others from northern breeding places beyond our shores visit British waters at this season. The bird's winter movements are

probably governed by the food supply. The Gannet's haunts are the open sea and the rock-stacks where it nests, its occurrence inland being accidental. A few birds arrive at their nesting quarters in mid-January, but it is not until February or March that they appear in large numbers. When fishing, the Solan Goose flies in wide circles over the water, and as soon as its prey is detected, the bird drops with wings half closed, descending obliquely until close to the waves, when it folds the wings and plunges into the water, swallowing its capture before it reappears. The descent is sometimes made from two or three hundred feet above the surface of the sea.



Gannet

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Food.**—Fish of various species.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On ledges of precipitous sea-cliffs. The bird breeds generally in large colonies, and the nests are placed close together. *Materials.* Seaweed, pieces of turf, moss, grasses. Rags, paper, straw, corks and various other rubbish are sometimes employed in the construction of the nest.

**Egg.**—1. Bluish green, but thickly covered with a chalky white substance, which almost obscures the under colouring. *Size.* About 3 × 2 inches. *Time.* Late March to June.

**Notes.**—A loud *urrah*, *irroo* or *wrow*.

### STORM-PETREL

*Hydrobates pelagicus*

**Description.**—*Male.* General colour sooty black, but there is an obscure white bar across the wing and a large white patch at the base of the tail, extending to the sides of the vent. Bill and legs black; the irides dark brown. Length, about 6½ inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Resemble the adults, but the wing-coverts have narrow white edges, forming a more noticeable bar than in the mature bird.



Photo: C. J. King

Storm-Petrel

islets off the coast of South Wales, in the Orkneys and Shetlands and on many of the Western Isles of Scotland, also on

**Distribution.**—Resident. Breeds in the Scilly Islands, on some

## *STORM-PETREL*

several islands off the north and west coasts of Ireland. In spring and autumn it becomes generally distributed round our shores, and during the prevalence of strong gales is often driven inland. In winter, usually very scarce and much scattered.

**Habits.**—The Storm-Petrel frequents its breeding places from April or May until the early autumn, but at other times it wanders far and wide over the ocean. The flight is swift and buoyant, and the great length of the narrow wings enables the bird to travel long distances untiringly. When at its nesting quarters, the Storm-Petrel is said never to walk, but to fly straight into or out from the nest-burrow, the nest itself apparently being reached by a shuffling motion, the body resting on the tarsus. When brooding, this Petrel frequently allows itself to be captured rather than forsake its egg, and if handled, the bird vomits a quantity of evil-smelling oil from the bill or nostrils, and is capable of ejecting this to a considerable distance.

**Food.**—Small crustaceans, small fish, oily matter, and during the breeding season, sorrel.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In the old burrow of a Puffin or rabbit, in holes in cliffs, under large boulders, and occasionally in crevices in walls. When in holes in the ground, these are said to be sometimes excavated by the bird. *Materials.* A few blades of grass—often the egg is laid on the bare ground.

**Egg.**—1. Chalky white, with an indistinct zone of small reddish brown specks round the larger end. *Size.* About  $1\cdot1 \times .83$  inches. *Time.* May to July, and even as late as September.

**Notes.**—A warbling chatter or purring sound while brooding. On the water it is a silent bird.

## LEACH'S FORK-TAILED PETREL

*Oceanodroma leucorrhoa*

**Description.**—*Male.* General colour sooty brown, the head and neck rather lighter than the rest of the plumage. There is a white patch on the lower part of the back. The median and major wing-coverts are pale brown, the latter margined with white. Tail deeply forked, which distinguishes the bird from the smaller Storm-Petrel. Bill and legs black; irides dark brown. Length, about 8 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Resemble adults, but the white on the wing-coverts is more pronounced.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Nests on the St. Kilda group of islands, the Flannan Isles, on North Rona (Outer Hebrides) and in Ireland on some islets off the coasts of Kerry and Mayo. Rather irregular visitor elsewhere along our coasts, although numbers are sometimes seen in autumn passing southwards—occasionally driven inland during stormy weather.

**Habits.**—The habits of this species are very similar to those of the Storm-Petrel.

**Food.**—Small crustaceans and cuttle-fish, fish-fry, and when the bird is at the breeding stations sorrel is eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In burrows in soft peat-earth, in holes in rocks, under boulders and in holes in walls close to the sea. *Materials.* Dry grass and pieces of moss. Sometimes no materials are employed.

**Egg.**—1. Very like that of the Storm-Petrel, but larger. *Size.* About  $1\cdot3 \times .96$  inches. *Time.* June usually, but sometimes late May. Fresh eggs may also be found in July.

**Note.**—Pewr-wit.

## MANX SHEARWATER

*Puffinus puffinus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts black; under parts white. The sides of the neck are mottled with grey. Bill blackish, slender and hooked. Irides dark brown; legs and toes black on the outer surface, pinkish on the inner side; webs bluish. Length, about 15 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Similar to the adult.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Breeds abundantly in the Scillies, also nests on several islands off the Welsh coast and on the mainland of North Wales, in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, especially on Eigg and St. Kilda, in the Orkneys and Shetlands and on some Irish headlands and islands.

**Habits.**—The Manx Shearwater is often common around our coasts even in summer, and in August and September a considerable movement takes place, the birds then becoming widely distributed. It is not infrequently found inland when storm-driven. In winter the numbers decrease, and this is particularly noticeable in Scotland and Ireland. Except during the breeding season, unless accidentally carried inland in stormy weather and compelled to alight, this bird is never seen on land, its life being spent at sea, where it will attend fishing vessels and whalers. When this Shearwater is feeding, the flight is peculiar, the bird alternately rising and descending with the waves, and it is from the oblique downward flight that the bird's name has doubtless originated. When the bird is passing to or from its feeding places, the flight is



Photo : C. J. King

Manx Shearwater

straighter, but the Manx Shearwater may always be distinguished from the Guillemot, Puffin and Razorbill by the slower movement of the longer wings and its more slender appearance.

**Food.**—Small fish, crustaceans, small cuttle-fish, offal.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Placed in a burrow in the turf of a sloping bank, or on the face of a cliff where there are patches of turf or grassy ledges. Sometimes amongst heaps of fallen rock or in a rock-crevice. Many of the burrows are excavated by the birds. *Materials.* Dry grasses or a little dead fern, but often without materials of any kind.

**Egg.**—1. White, without gloss. *Size.* About 2·4 × 1·65 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—Variously described as “cuckolds in a row,” *kok-a-roo-roo*, or *crew-cockathodon*.

## GREAT SHEARWATER

*Puffinus gravis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts mainly greyish brown; wing-quills dusky brown; under tail-coverts sooty brown. Cheeks and under parts white, the centre of the abdomen mottled with blackish brown. Bill yellowish green; legs pale greenish grey; webs flesh-coloured; irides dark brown. Length, about 19 inches. *Sexes alike.*

**Distribution.**—Autumn visitor. Occurs chiefly off the south-west coast of England and around the Western Isles of Scotland. This species is fairly frequent off the Yorkshire coast, but is seldom seen elsewhere on the east side. Sometimes observed off the south and west coasts of Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Great Shearwater keeps well out at sea, very seldom being noticed near land. It frequently occurs in flocks, usually between August and November, but sometimes appears at the end of June or in July.

**Food.**—Fish, marine weeds and crustaceans.

**Notes.**—Nothing has apparently been recorded.

## SOOTY SHEARWATER

*Puffinus griseus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Sooty brown above, lighter on the under surface. Bill horn-colour; irides and legs dark brown. Length, about 18 inches. *Sexes alike.* The bird is easily recognized by its almost uniform dark brown coloration.

**Distribution.**—Autumn visitor. Most frequently noticed in the English Channel and off the east coast of Great Britain. It has also been observed off the coasts of Cork, Kerry and Mayo.

**Habits.**—The Sooty Shearwater occurs chiefly from August to October, although it has also been recorded in July, November and December. Off the Yorkshire coast it is sufficiently regular to be well known, and has been called the "Black Shearwater" by the fisher-folk. It has sometimes been observed in small flocks.

**Food and Notes.**—Apparently unrecorded.

## FULMAR PETREL

*Fulmarus glacialis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck and under parts white; back, wings and tail bluish grey, darker on the wing-quills. Bill yellowish, tinged with green and brown; legs greenish grey; irides dark brown. Length, about 19 inches. *Sexes alike.* There is a dark form in which the head, neck and under parts are grey, the back and wings darker. *Young.* Paler than the adults. Although bearing a general resemblance to a gull, this species may always be distinguished by the tubular sheath at the base of the bill.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Increasing and extending its breeding range. Nests in great numbers in St. Kilda, also breeds in other parts of the Outer Hebrides, in the Orkneys and Shetlands, in Sutherland and Caithness and in several places in Ireland. It has recently been found nesting in Kinocardine and Aberdeen, in Forfar, on St. Abbs Head, and on

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Bempton Cliffs. At most seasons of the year the Fulmar is met with at sea off the east coast of Great Britain and off the north and west coasts of Ireland. In winter it occurs off the south and west coasts of England.

**Habits.**—The Fulmar Petrel, except during the nesting

season, is strictly a bird of the ocean, where it attends upon whaling vessels for the sake of the blubber and oil, or follows ships in quest of any offal which may be cast overboard. It frequently wanders to great distances from land. In its attendance upon the deep-sea fishing-boats, this Petrel is often so eager in its desire for food as to permit itself to be



Fulmar Petrel

caught by hand or knocked down by an oar. The flight of the Fulmar is graceful and powerful, and it is capable of sailing against a strong Atlantic gale with little apparent effort.

**Food.**—Fish, molluscs, offal. Sorrel is eaten during the breeding season.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a depression on turf-covered ledges or in a scratching in the soil, also amongst broken rocks.

*Materials.* Usually none. Sometimes a little dry grass or tufts of sea-pink. When on rock-ledges, small flat pieces of stone are often placed round the egg.

**Egg.**—1. White, and coarse in texture. *Size.* About 2·9 x 1·98 inches. *Time.* May and June.

## GREAT CRESTED GREBE

**Note.**—Apparently rarely utters a note of any kind. It has been heard to emit a hoarse grunt or cough during the courtship period.

## GREAT CRESTED GREBE

*Podiceps cristatus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts dark brown; under surface white, the feathers having a silky sheen. The crown is adorned with two dusky erectile tufts, or "ears," and the head is enveloped in a frill of rich chestnut feathers with dark tips, also erectile. Cheeks whitish; front of neck silvery white. A broad band of white is very noticeable on the extended wing. Flanks pale chestnut. Bill black at tip, reddish towards the base; legs light olive-green; the irides are crimson. Length, about 21 inches. *Sexes alike.* The tufts and frill are lost during the autumn moult. *Young.* The plumage is very

like that of the adult in winter, but the head and neck are longitudinally striped with greyish brown. The irides are yellow.

**Distribution.**—Resident and passage-migrant. During recent years has increased greatly and extended its breeding range. Now nests in most suitable localities in England, in some parts of Wales, in many districts in Ireland, and not uncommonly in Scotland, south of the Grampians. A rare



Great Crested Grebe

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

or uncommon visitor to the northern mainland of Scotland, Inner Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands. Unknown in the Outer Hebrides.

**Habits.**—During the breeding season this handsome Grebe frequents large sheets of water, and although in winter many birds resort to the coast or tidal waters, others may often be seen on inland waters at this season; indeed, the Great Crested Grebe is seldom long absent from some fresh-water lakes. Birds which migrate to the coast leave their inland haunts in November, this movement being preceded by the formation of flocks. Small parties of passage-migrants are not unusual in May, when our resident birds are engaged in nesting operations. The female appears to perform the major share of the duty of incubation, but the male also takes some part, and after the young are hatched he is as assiduous as his mate in his care until the chicks are sufficiently well grown to require less attention. When the nest is voluntarily vacated, the eggs are usually concealed, the bird carefully covering them with a portion of the nest material, a habit which is common to all the grebes.

**Food.**—Mainly fish, also aquatic insects, newts and molluscs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Amongst reeds or moored to other water-plants. Sometimes built up from the bottom in shallow water. Well concealed at times by tall, thick reeds, but often conspicuous amongst water-persicaria or other short vegetation. *Materials.* Flags, reeds and various other water-plants. Larger than the nests of other Grebes.

**Eggs.**—Usually 4, sometimes 3 or 5, rarely 6. Pale bluish or greenish white when laid, quickly becoming stained to a brown or reddish colour. *Size.* About  $2\cdot2 \times 1\cdot45$  inches. *Time.* April to June. Often later. Distinguished from those of the other Grebes by their larger size.

**Notes.**—Adults. *Eck, eck, eck*, also a harsh *craarrr*. Young. A shrill *pee-r, pee-r, pee-r*.

## SLAVONIAN GREBE

*Podiceps auritus*.

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, upper neck and throat glossy black, with the exception of the elongated buffish chestnut tufts, or "horns," on each side of the head. Upper parts blackish brown; lower neck, breast and flanks rich chestnut. Under parts white, the abdomen showing dusky markings. The head and throat feathers are extended so as to form a ruff. Bill black, reddish at the base and tipped with bluish grey; irides carmine; legs olive-green. Length, about 13½ inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the head plumes and ruff are absent, the crown and hind-neck greyish black. Throat, sides of face, fore-neck and under parts white. Flanks ash-colour. Bill bluish grey, yellow at the base and tip. *Young.* Resemble adults in winter dress, but are browner and there are streaks of sooty brown on the sides of the head.

**Distribution.**—Chiefly a winter visitor and passage-migrant, but a few birds nest on the mainland in the north of Scotland. A regular winter visitor to most of our coasts. Non-breeding birds have been observed not infrequently in summer, chiefly in Scotland and Ireland.

**Habits**—The Slavonian Grebe begins to arrive on our coasts in small numbers towards the end of August, many more reaching us during the two following months, the passage movements continuing until November. The birds move northwards from April to June. Although chiefly observed along the coast, this Grebe is by no means rare on some inland waters. The bird is an accomplished diver, but sometimes readily resorts to flight if alarmed, when the white bar is very noticeable on the extended wing.

**Food.**—Water-weeds, aquatic insects, fish and crustaceans.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Amongst rushes or other water-plants.

**Materials.** Similar to those employed by other Grebes

**Eggs.**—4 or 5. Greenish white, quickly becoming stained to a yellowish or brown colour. **Size.** About  $1\cdot75 \times 1\cdot21$  inches. **Time.** May and June.

**Note.**—Described by Mr. A. D. Du Bois as *ko-wee, ko-wee*.

### RED-NECKED GREBE

*Podiceps griseigena*

**Description.**—*Male.* The black crown feathers are elongated. Throat and cheeks blue-grey, a white line bounding this area below the eye. Fore-neck and breast bright chestnut; hind-neck black; flanks reddish, with dusky tips to the feathers; under parts silky white. Back dark brown, suffused with grey; wings blackish, bordered with white. Bill black, yellow at the base; irides carmine; legs greenish black. Length, about 18 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the sides of the head and neck are white and the crown feathers much shorter than in summer. The winter dress is not unlike that of the Great Crested Grebe, but the bird is rather smaller, less slender in appearance and the neck is shorter, while the dark colour of the crown extends to the eye. *Young.* Plumage similar to that of the adult in winter, but cheeks and upper portion of neck more or less streaked with black.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Occurs chiefly on the east coast of Great Britain, where it is regular but not often numerous. In the English Channel it is irregular, and is rare on the west coasts of Great Britain. A straggler to Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Red-necked Grebe sometimes reaches our shores in small numbers in August, but usually arrives from the middle of September onwards, the birds departing in March or April. During the winter months it is generally found off the coast, much less frequently resorting to inland waters than its allies.

## **BLACK-NECKED GREBE**

**Food.**—Fresh-water insects, small fish, crustaceans and aquatic weeds.

**Notes.**—Said to resemble those of the Great Crested Grebe. Usually a silent bird in winter.

## **BLACK-NECKED GREBE**

*Podiceps nigricollis*

**Description.**—*Male.* General colour of upper parts, including the neck, glossy black. A patch of elongated straw-coloured feathers extends from the eye over the ear-coverts and a portion of the cheeks, forming a tuft on either side of the head. Breast black; flanks dark chestnut; under parts white. There is a white patch on the wing, generally concealed by the flank feathers when the bird is swimming. Bill bluish black and reddish at the base; irides red; legs blackish. Length, about 12 inches. *Female.* Rather smaller, ear-coverts less prominent. In winter the plumes or tufts are absent, the throat and sides of head are white, as are also the breast and under parts. Upper parts brownish black; fore-neck dirty white; flanks mottled with grey. The slightly upturned bill distinguishes the bird from the Slavonian Grebe in winter dress. *Young.* Plumage closely resembles the winter dress of adults, but the irides are yellow.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Has been known to nest regularly in Wales since 1904, and on the reservoirs near Tring, Hertfordshire, since 1918. It has bred in the west of Ireland since 1915, and nested in a second locality in Ireland in 1918. Also a winter visitor and regular passage-migrant in autumn and spring, chiefly seen along the northern half of the east coast of England and in Merioneth, elsewhere much less frequently noticed. Sometimes visits inland waters from autumn to spring. Occasionally observed in summer outside its breeding range.

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**Habits.**—The Black-necked, or Eared Grebe, as a winter visitor arrives from August to November, but it is during the spring migration that the bird is most numerous, being less frequently observed in autumn. The habits of this species closely resemble those of the other members of the family, but the bird is more sociable during the breeding season, and on the Continent nests in colonies, sometimes as many as thirty or forty pairs breeding together.

**Food.**—Aquatic insects and their larvæ, small fish, weeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Amongst bog-bean, rushes, or other aquatic vegetation on the margins of lakes and reservoirs.

*Materials.* A heap of decaying water-plants.

**Eggs.**—3 or 4, occasionally 5 or 6. Similar to those of the Dabchick, but slightly larger. *Size.* About 1·7 × 1·18 inches. *Time.* May.

**Notes.**—The trill has been described by Mr. T. A. Coward as not unlike that of the Little Grebe. *Call.* A soft *beeb*.

### LITTLE GREBE

*Podiceps ruficollis*

**Description.**—*Male.* In summer the general colour above is almost black, somewhat browner on the lower back and rump. Chin and breast black; throat, cheeks and sides of neck rich chestnut. Flanks and under parts blackish, with a silvery sheen. Bill blackish, yellow at the tip and gape; legs olive-green; irides hazel. Length, about 9 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the upper parts are dark brown; cheeks, throat and under surface white, but brownish on the lower neck and breast. Flanks brownish buff. *Young.* Plumage resembles that of the mature bird in winter, but is lighter, and on the sides of the head there are dusky longitudinal stripes.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Widely distributed, but less numerous in the northern parts of Scotland than elsewhere,

## LITTLE GREBE

although found in the Outer Hebrides and Orkneys, and it possibly breeds in the Shetlands.

**Habits.**—Although our home-bred birds are probably resident, in the winter many Little Grebes resort to coastal waters during hard weather, and in autumn a few appear on our east coasts from more northern breeding grounds. During mild winter weather there is also undoubtedly a good deal of local movement, birds often appearing on lakes, ponds or rivers at some distance from their nesting haunts, and at this season they become more or less sociable, parties containing up to a dozen birds or more not being infrequent. Ponds, sluggish rivers, canals and the edges of lakes and reservoirs are the favourite breeding places of the Little Grebe or Dabchick. The bird, as a rule, prefers smaller sheets of water than the Great Crested Grebe.

**Food.**—Small fish, aquatic insects and water-weeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Amongst reeds, rushes or other water-plants. Sometimes sheltered by branches of trees overhanging the water. Often amongst scanty vegetation, at other times well concealed. *Materials.* A collection of decaying aquatic weeds.

**Eggs.**—4 to 6, rarely 7. White or bluish white when laid, quickly becoming stained by contact with the materials



Photo : Howard Bentham

**Little Grebe**

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

of the nest. *Size.* About 1·45 × 1·0 inches. *Time.* March to August, or even September.

**Notes.**—A long rippling trill. *Alarm note.* *Whit, whit.*

### GREAT NORTHERN DIVER

*Colymbus immer*

**Description.**—*Male.* The general appearance in summer resembles that of the Black-throated Diver, but the upper parts are more evenly marked with white, and the head and neck are black, glossed with green and purple. The centre of the throat is marked by a band of white spots, and below this on either side of the neck is a broad band of white streaks, forming a broken collar. Bill and legs black; irides red. Length, about 30 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the head and hind-neck are brown, with a greenish gloss; rest of upper parts dark greyish brown, the feathers margined with ash-colour, except on the wing-coverts, giving a spotted appearance. Throat, fore-neck and under parts white; flanks greyish brown; bill bluish horn. *Young.* In winter closely resemble the adults, but the fore-neck is speckled with brown.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Occurs fairly generally around all our coasts, but most abundant in the north. In the Outer Hebrides and Shetlands found at most times of the year, but it is probable that those seen in summer are non-breeding birds. Sometimes occurs on inland waters.

**Habits.**—The Great Northern Diver sometimes arrives about mid-September or even earlier, but October is perhaps the month during which the majority reach us. Most of the birds have left by the end of April, but stragglers linger until May. Immature birds are more often recorded than adults, and this is thought to be due to the fact that the latter usually keep well away from the shore. The bird is not usually gregarious, although several may not infrequently be seen in the same fishing-place.

## **BLACK-THROATED DIVER**

**Food.**—Chiefly fish.

**Notes.**—A loud *hooo-hoo-hoo-hoo*, also a barking cry and a wailing note.

## **BLACK-THROATED DIVER**

*Colymbus arcticus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, nape and hind-neck bluish grey, darkest on the fore-part of the head. Cheeks dusky; chin and throat black. Immediately below the chin is a collar of short longitudinal black and white lines. Sides of neck marked with longitudinal lines of black and white; sides of breast adorned with similar but more numerous lines. Back, scapulars and wing-coverts black. The scapulars are marked with large patches of white, forming broad bars, and the coverts are ornamented with small white spots. Wing-quills and tail feathers dusky black; flanks black; under surface white. Bill and legs black; irides red. Length, about 28 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the upper parts are dark greyish brown, the crown and back of neck lighter. Throat, fore-neck and under parts white; sides of neck dusky. Bill bluish horn. *Young.* The plumage is similar to that of the adult in winter, but the scapulars and wing-coverts show distinct light markings.

**Distribution.**—Resident and a winter visitor. Nests in



Black-throated Diver

Inverness, Ross, Sutherland and Caithness, less numerously in Perth and Argyll, and in fair numbers in the Outer Hebrides. Occasionally breeds in Skye and the Orkneys. More widely distributed round our coasts in winter, but never common, and particularly rare on the west coast of England, in Wales and in Ireland. The rarest of the three Divers in winter.

**Habits.**—During the breeding season, the Black-throated Diver frequents the wildest mountain and moorland lochs, especially those containing islets, which naturally afford greater security during the nesting period. The bird shows a marked partiality for large sheets of water. In autumn there is a southward movement, although some birds remain throughout the winter on the Scottish lochs. About mid-October, birds reach us from more northern breeding grounds, remaining until May. The Black-throated Diver is an extremely wary bird, and will dive or sink the body low in the water on the least alarm.

**Food.**—Mainly fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Close to the water's edge, on shores of lochs or on small grassy islets in sheets of fresh water. Sometimes amongst grass or rushes, at other times in a hollow amongst shingle. *Materials.* A little grass or a few roots or stalks. Often no materials are used, the eggs being deposited in a formed or natural depression.

**Eggs.**—2, sometimes 1. Buffish brown to dark olive-brown. Sometimes light olive-green, sparsely spotted with umber and blackish brown. Larger than eggs of the Red-throated Diver. *Size.* About 3·25 × 2·0 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—A melancholy wailing cry. The alarm note has been compared to the croak of a Raven. A yelping is uttered at times.

## RED-THROATED DIVER

*Colymbus stellatus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck pale bluish grey, the crown showing blackish mottlings. The hind-neck is marked with alternate lines of black and white. Back and wings greyish brown, sparsely spotted with white, except on the darker primaries. Throat red; flanks greyish black; under parts white. Bill black and slightly upturned; legs greenish black; irides red. Length, about 24 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the red on the throat is absent, as are also the streaks on the hind-neck. *Upper*

parts slaty grey, spotted with white. Chin, fore-neck and sides of head white, as are also the under parts. Flanks brownish grey; bill whitish horn. *Young.* Plumage like the winter dress of the adult, but the back and wing-coverts are edged instead of spotted with white. The fore-neck is mottled with brown.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Nests from South Inverness northwards, especially in Caithness and East Sutherland, also breeds in the Outer Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands. In Ireland it nests in County Donegal. Much more widely distributed in winter, when it is found off all our coasts, and also visits estuaries and inland waters. Much more numerous as a breeding species than the Black-throated Diver.

**Habits.**—Although no doubt many of our resident birds move southward in autumn, this species visits us in considerable numbers in winter from more northerly breeding places beyond our shores, and at this season of the year



Photo: Miss E. L. Turner

Red-throated Diver

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

the bird is the commonest of the three Divers. The winter residents normally commence to arrive about the middle of September, but a few birds sometimes appear a month earlier. The return passage takes place in March and April, but may continue until May. The summer haunts of the Red-throated Diver are very similar to those of the preceding species, but it not infrequently nests on the margins of small lakes. In habits it does not differ greatly from its rarer ally.

**Food.**—Chiefly fish, also sand-eels, molluscs and crustaceans.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On turf or amongst shingle on the edges of lochs and tarns, or on islands in sheets of fresh water. *Materials.* Often none; but rushes, dry grass or heather twigs are sometimes sparingly employed.

**Eggs.**—2, not infrequently 1. Similar in ground-colour and markings to those of the last-described bird, but smaller. *Size.* About 2·8 × 1·8 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—A loud wailing note, a barking *kakera, kakera*, also a guttural alarm-cry.

## WOOD-PIGEON

*Columba palumbus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts bluish grey, darker on the primaries, which are edged with white. The wings are crossed by a white bar, very conspicuous when the feathers are expanded in flight. Head and neck glossed with metallic green and purple, and on either side of the latter is a large white patch. Tail blackish grey above, pale grey on the under side, which terminates in a bluish grey bar. Breast vinous; abdomen pale bluish grey. Bill red at base, yellow towards the tip; legs red; irides yellow. Length, about 16 inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished from the other Doves by the white on its neck and wings, and large size.

## WOOD-PIGEON

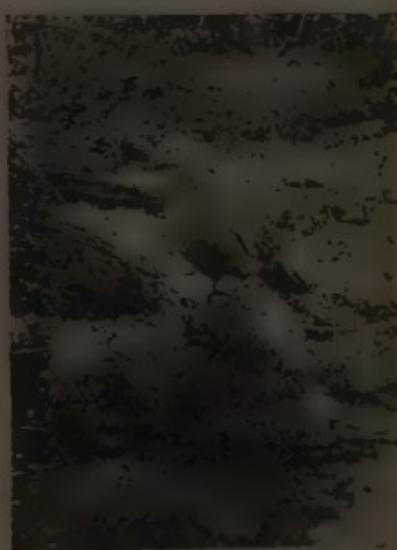
**Young.** Duller and paler, tinged with brown and lacking the white neck-patches.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Generally distributed and common almost throughout the British Isles, but only breeds sparingly in the Orkneys and Outer Hebrides, and only occurs as a passage-migrant in the Shetlands.

**Habits.**—The Wood-Pigeon, or Ring-Dove, breeds commonly in wooded districts as well as in parks and pleasure-grounds. It is now well established in many of the London parks and gardens, also in those of other large cities. Although a somewhat shy species in the country, many of our town-bred birds are remarkably tame and will even feed from the hand, having quite lost their natural timidity where they are unmolested. Numbers of Wood-Pigeons arrive on the east coast in autumn, and as very few of the home-bred birds leave our area, the species is much more abundant in winter than during the summer. The numbers of immigrants, however, vary greatly from year to year. In winter the Ring-Dove is gregarious, the flocks often being very large during seasons when the bird is abundant. The soft cooing notes may be heard from March to October, and occasionally in winter.

**Food.**—Beech-mast, grain, acorns, berries, greens, turnip-tops and other leaves, also seeds of charlock.

**Neat.—Situation.** In trees or tall hedges at varying heights from the ground. Sometimes amongst ivy growing on trees, walls or cliffs. **Materials.** Dead sticks and twigs,



Wood-Pigeon

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

woven into a flimsy platform, through which the eggs can often be seen from below.

**Eggs.**—2. White and glossy. **Size.** About  $1\cdot65 \times 1\cdot25$  inches. **Time.** April to July, but eggs have been found in almost every month of the year.

**Notes.**—A soft *coo-coo-co-co, coo.*

### STOCK-DOVE

*Columba oenas*

**Description.**—**Male.** Upper parts bluish grey, lightest on the rump. On either side of the neck is a patch of metallic green, with purplish reflections. Primaries dark slate-grey. There are two irregular black bars across the wing. Breast, throat and fore-neck vinaceous; under parts pale blue-grey. Tail pale grey, blackish towards the tip. Bill yellow, red towards the base; irides brown; legs pinkish red. **Sexes alike.** Length, about  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Easily distinguished by the absence of white in the plumage. **Young.** Resemble adults, but lack the metallic colours on the neck, and the wing-bars are very indistinct. When nesting in sea-cliffs, the Stock-Dove is sometimes confused with the much more local Rock-Dove, from which, however, it may readily be distinguished, the rump and under side of the wings being grey, whereas these parts are white in the rarer bird.

**Distribution.**—Resident, and probably a winter visitor to a limited extent. Local in England and Wales, but widely



Stock-Dove

## STOCK-DOVE

distributed. In Scotland it breeds as far north as Sutherland, having greatly extended its range during recent years. To Caithness and the Orkneys and Shetlands it is a rare visitor, and has not been recorded from the Hebrides. In Ireland it nests in many parts of Leinster and Ulster, and is increasing its range.

**Habits.**—The Stock-Dove is less of a woodland species than the Ring-Dove. It is found nesting in parks, the more open portions of woods, on sea and inland cliffs, in quarries, on heaths and commons and amongst sandhills. In winter the bird is gregarious, although seldom seen in large flocks, and at this season of the year often associates with Wood-Pigeons. Even in summer the two species frequently share the same feeding grounds. Although chiefly resident within our area, this bird is probably a winter visitor to a limited extent; a slight autumn immigration sometimes being observed on the east coast.

**Food.**—Seeds of weeds, grain, acorns, berries and beech-mast.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In hollow trees, rabbit-burrows or crevices in rocks, in ivy growing against trees, rocks or buildings, amongst thick growth of pollarded trees, in ruins or on the ground under dense gorse bushes. Sometimes in disused Magpies' nests or squirrels' dreys. *Materials.* Sometimes a few twigs, roots or straws, but in most cases no material is used.

**Eggs.**—2. Creamy white. **Size.** About  $1\cdot45 \times 1\cdot15$  inches. **Time.** March to October.

**Note.**—A grunting *coo-roo*.

## ROCK-DOVE

*Columba livia*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck dark bluish grey, with a patch of metallic green on either side of the latter. Back and wing-coverts light blue-grey; primaries bluish grey, darker at the tips. Wings crossed by two black bars.

Rump and underwing-coverts white. Tail dark blue-grey, with a terminal bar of black, the outer webs of the outermost pair of feathers white. Under parts grey, glossed on the upper breast with green and purple. Bill brown, tinged with red; legs purplish red; irides reddish orange. Length, about  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Sexes alike.*  
*Young.* Duller, lacking the metallic colours.



Nest of Rock-Dove

**DISTRIBUTION.** — Resident. Nests commonly on the sea-cliffs of Yorkshire, in Devon and Cornwall, where it is rare,

and in one locality in Cumberland. On the Welsh coasts it breeds in many places, and in Scotland and Ireland is plentiful in suitable places, especially on the west coasts and islands.

**Habits.**—The Rock-Dove is exclusively a maritime species, and records of birds observed in inland localities probably refer to domestic pigeons which have reverted to the wild type, all our varieties of tame birds having been derived from the species under notice, and not from the Stock-Dove, as is sometimes supposed. The Rock-Dove pairs with domestic varieties which have strayed away from our homesteads, so that many birds found nesting in a wild state show traces of inter-breeding. The wild bird visits farmlands, where it

## TURTLE-DOVE

will feed with dove-cot pigeons, but although fond of grain, is not sufficiently numerous to be very harmful. At all times gregarious, the Rock-Dove is a stationary species, there being no evidence of any migratory movement, although in severe weather it will wander to a certain extent from its chosen haunts, sometimes in large flocks.

**Food.**—Grain, green shoots, buds, seeds and roots of weeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On a ledge or in a crevice of a sea-cave, sometimes in a hole in the face of a cliff. *Materials.* A slight collection of twigs, heather, roots and seaweed. Sometimes composed entirely of the last-named material.

**Eggs.**—2. White. **Size.** About  $1\cdot54 \times 1\cdot15$  inches. **Time.** March to August, although eggs have been found in almost every month of the year.

**Note.**—*Coo-roo-coo*, the last note prolonged.

## TURTLE-DOVE

*Streptopelia turtur*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck bluish grey, with a patch of black, white-tipped feathers on each side of the latter. Wing-coverts and scapulars black, with light edges; primaries dusky brown, broadly margined with cinnamon-brown. Back and rump ash-brown, lightest on the margins of the feathers. Central tail feathers dusky brown, the rest nearly black, and broadly tipped with white, the outer feathers white on the outer webs. Throat and fore-neck pale vinous, breast darker; abdomen and under tail-coverts white. Bill dusky brown; legs red; irides reddish brown. Length, about  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Female.* Duller, but otherwise resembles the male. *Young.* Much duller and lacking the black and white neck-patch. Under parts dull ash-colour, tinged with brown.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and passage-migrant.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Breeds chiefly in the southern, midland and eastern counties of England, becoming rarer in the north. It is rare in Cornwall, and on the west side of Wales. Occurs during migration in most parts of Scotland, including the Northern and

Western Isles, but apparently does not nest. In Ireland a scarce but regular visitor to south coast, a vagrant elsewhere. Said to remain to nest occasionally.



Turtle-Dove

**Habits.**—The Turtle-Dove arrives in some seasons during the closing days of April, but often does not reach us before May, the movement extending over the greater part of the latter month. The return migration is performed chiefly in September, but earlier and later movements are sometimes noticeable. The open portions of woods, plantations,

copses, spinneys, hill-side thickets, commons overgrown with whitethorn and other bushes are the favourite haunts of this bird. The Turtle-Dove is sociable even during the breeding season, small flocks often congregating at favourite feeding places, and later in the year the species is even more gregarious. The flight is straight when the bird is in the open, but amongst trees or bushes it turns and twists rapidly. When brooding the Turtle-Dove readily takes alarm, and the situation of the nest is too often revealed by the bird hurriedly taking wing.

**Food.**—Grain, seeds, berries and tender shoots.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a tree or bush, often in a tall, unkept hedgerow. Usually at no great height from the

## *PALLAS'S SAND-GROUSE*

ground. *Materials.* Slender twigs. An even more flimsy structure than that of the Ring-Dove.

**Eggs.**—2. White, slightly tinged with cream. *Size.* About  $1\cdot18 \times .88$  inches. *Time* May to July

**Note.**—A deep purring *tur-tur*.

## *PALLAS'S SAND-GROUSE*

*Syrrhaptes paradoxus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head sandy grey; throat and cheeks rust-colour. Back sandy buff, barred and spotted with brown. Fore-breast greyish buff, bordered by a band of crescent-shaped black lines; lower breast sandy buff, below which is a broad band of chocolate-brown; rest of under parts white. There is a large patch of buff on the wing and the primaries are lavender-grey. Two central tail feathers elongated and pointed. The feet are feathered and there is no hind-toe. Bill and irides brown. Length, about 17 inches. *Female.* Upper parts more spotted. The head is streaked, and the crescent-shaped markings on the breast and buff wing-patch are absent. The chocolate patch is smaller and the tail less pointed. Length, about 15 inches.

**Distribution.**—Irregular visitor, occasionally appearing in considerable numbers, as in May, 1863 and 1888, when the birds arrived all along the east coast and spread inland in small flocks over the greater part of the British Isles, even reaching Ireland. Eggs were found in Yorkshire in 1888, and young birds observed in Scotland in 1888 and 1889. A slight invasion occurred in 1908

## STONE-CURLEW

*Burhinus oedicnemus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Light brown above, streaked with dark brown. The primaries are blackish brown, and a pale double wing-bar is noticeable during flight. Chin and throat white. There is a light streak above and another

below the eye. Fore-neck, breast and flanks very pale brown, streaked with blackish brown; belly almost white, and unstreaked. Under tail-coverts reddish buff. Tail mottled with two shades of brown on the upper half, and barred with black and white towards the tip. The short bill is yellow, black at the tip; irides very large, golden yellow in colour; legs greenish yellow. Length, about 17 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. Resemble adults, but are paler and more distinctly barred on the tail.



Photo : Miss E. L. Turner  
Stone-Curlew

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. A few sometimes remain throughout the winter in Devon and Cornwall, and occasionally in other localities. Nests in Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincoln, Yorkshire, Essex, Kent, Sussex, Hants, Dorset, Wilts, Bucks, Berks, Herts and Cambridgeshire. To Scotland and Ireland and to most other parts only a wanderer.

**Habits.**—The Stone-Curlew, Norfolk Plover, or Thick-knee arrives at the end of March or during early April, departing in October. The bird frequents dry commons, chalk-downs, warrens and heaths. In one locality in Kent it haunts a wide expanse of shingle partially overgrown with gorse and other bushes. Gregarious as migrants, the

## OYSTER-CATCHER.

birds collect in flocks in October before leaving our shores. The Great Plover, as the bird is sometimes called, is a wary species, and in the open country which it usually frequents, is difficult to approach. During the day it is a silent bird, but at dusk its weird call at once attracts attention.

**Food.**—Various insects, snails, slugs, worms, lizards and frogs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On stony ground or where the vegetation is very stunted. Generally in the open at a considerable distance from any cover. *Materials.* The slight hollow is sometimes lined with stones, rabbits' droppings or a few blades of grass, but is often without lining.

**Eggs.**—2. Buff or stone-colour, blotched; spotted and streaked with blackish brown, the underlying markings being ash-grey. *Size.* About  $2\cdot1 \times 1\cdot55$  inches. *Time.* April, May and June.

**Note.**—A shrill wailing cry, which has been written *cour-li-vee*

## OYSTER-CATCHER

*Hæmatopus ostralegus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck, throat, upper breast, back and wings black, with the exception of a broad white wing-bar. There is a small white patch under the eye, and the lower back and upper tail-coverts are white, as are also the under parts. Tail feathers black. Bill orange-red; irides crimson; legs flesh-pink. Length, about 16 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the sides of the neck are white, and a white gorget appears on the throat. *Young.* Browner on the back and wings, some of the feathers being margined with buff. A white bar appears on the throat after the autumn moult.

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Nests very sparingly in a few places on the east and south coasts of

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

England, more commonly on the Welsh coasts and from Lancashire northwards. Breeds numerously in Scotland and Ireland. Sometimes nests inland on banks of rivers and lakes.

**Habits.**—In autumn many of our resident Oyster-Catchers move southward from the more northerly districts, and at this season a considerable number arrive from the Continent to pass the winter on our shores. The bird is most abundant in summer on the rocky portions of the coast, but breeds in smaller numbers on shingle banks and sand-dunes. In summer parties of non-breeding birds are not uncommon on both rocky and sandy por-

Oyster-Catcher

tions of the coast, and at all seasons the species is sociable, the winter flocks sometimes being very large. This bird is at most times noisy, especially after the young are hatched, when both parents utter a clamorous piping so long as danger threatens. During the incubation period the Oyster-Catcher, or Seapie, is extremely wary, the sitting bird leaving the nest long before the near approach of an intruder, the ever-watchful male never failing to warn his mate. The latter runs for some distance from the eggs before joining the male bird on the wing, fully aware that to rise from the nest would only too readily lead to its discovery.

**Food.**—Mussels, limpets, shore-worms, crustaceans and small fish.

## DOTTEREL

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Amongst rocks, on sandhills or on shingle banks. Frequently amongst a mixture of sand and coarse shingle just above high-water mark. *Materials.* Broken shells, small pebbles, bents or seaweed. Sometimes the selected hollow is unlined.

**Eggs.**—2 to 4, usually 3. Yellowish stone or cream-colour, boldly streaked, scrawled and spotted with blackish brown, the markings sometimes forming a belt. Underlying markings grey. *Size.* About 2·2 × 1·5 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Call.* *Heep, heep, heep*   *Alarm.* A rapid *kurk, kurk, kurk.*

## DOTTEREL

*Charadrius morinellus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown and nape brownish black, streaked with brown. Back brownish grey. A broad white band over the eye extends to the nape. Chin, cheeks and throat white, a dark streak passing through the eye to the sides of the neck. Wings greyish brown, darkest on the primaries, the coverts margined with rufous. Upper breast slaty brown, and divided from the chestnut lower breast by black and white bands. Abdomen black; under tail-coverts white. Tail olive-brown, tipped with white. Bill black; irides dark brown; legs greenish yellow. Length, about 9 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young Eye-stripe buff, crown more streaked, and the blacker upper parts are



Dotterel

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

mottled with buff. Breast and flanks rich buff; abdomen white. Under parts mottled with grey.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and a passage - migrant. Breeds on the Grampian and Cairngorm ranges, and in a few other localities in the Highlands of Scotland, also sparingly in the Lake District. It has been observed while on passage in various parts of England and Scotland. Of only casual occurrence in Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Dotterel is one of the latest migrants to reach our shores, arriving in small parties late in April or early in May. These parties, or "trips," may consist of from four or five to twenty birds, but only a few remain to nest with us. Our breeding birds return in August and September, but passage-migrants occur as late as the end of October. Many birds while migrating follow inland routes, while others travel along the coast. The nesting haunts of this species are on mountain ranges at an altitude of from 2,000 to 3,000 feet, where the ground is clothed with stunted alpine plants. Incubation is said to be performed by both sexes, but the male undoubtedly often bears the major portion of the work.

**Food.**—Mainly various insects and their larvæ.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* A depression amongst moss, lichens or other short mountain vegetation. *Materials.* Usually none. Sometimes a few leaves or a little dead grass.

**Eggs.**—3. Yellowish olive or stone - colour, thickly blotched and spotted with dark brown or black. *Size.* About  $1\cdot65 \times 1\cdot15$  inches. *Time.* June. Sometimes late in May. Clutches found in July are probably second layings.

**Note.**—*Durr-droo*

## RINGED PLOVER

*Charadrius hiaticula*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead white; the centre of the crown black, followed by greyish brown, which extends down the nape. Back and wings greyish brown, but the major coverts are tipped with white and the primaries dusky, with white centres to the shafts. A black patch extends from the gape, passing below the eye to the side of the neck. A broad white collar passes round the upper neck, below which is a black gorget. There is a white patch behind the eye. Tail greyish black and edged with white; the breast and under parts white. Bill orange-yellow, tipped with black; legs orange; irides dark brown. Length, about 8 inches. *Sexes alike*, except that there is less black on the head and neck of the female. *Young.* The black crown-band is lacking, and the gorget and band beneath the eye are dusky brown. Legs brownish yellow.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and a passage-migrant. Generally distributed round our coasts and not a few breed in inland localities.

**Habits.**—The Ringed Plover is most partial to stretches of coast where there is sand and shingle, but it is also found on flat rock-strewn ground, and inland it breeds on the banks of rivers and lakes, or on sewage farms, and on waste land, as at Thetford, Norfolk. Probably most of the birds nesting with us are resident throughout the year, although subject to local movements. A considerable number reach us in autumn.



Ringed Plover

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

from Northern Europe, many of which spend the winter in Ireland and the south of England. This species is sociable at all times, many pairs nesting within a limited area of suitable ground. In autumn and winter the flocks are sometimes very large, and at this time the birds associate with other small waders.

**Food.**—Small crustaceans and molluscs, also worms and insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On sand or shingle, or on flat rock-strewn ground, on short grass or among stunted sea-plants. *Materials.* The slight hollow may be lined with fragments of shell and small pebbles, chips of rock, small sticks, stalks or sea-wrack, but many eggs are deposited in an unlined depression.

**Eggs.**—4. Pale buff, yellowish or stone-colour, marked fairly evenly with small brownish black spots. *Size.* About  $1\cdot 4 \times 1\cdot 0$  inches. *Time.* April, May and June, but eggs have been found in March, July, and even August.

**Note.**—*Tu-li.* Sometimes uttered rapidly several times in succession, forming a trill.

### KENTISH PLOVER

*Charadrius alexandrinus*

**Description.**—*Male.* The white of the forehead is extended backwards over the eye, there is a black band on the front of the crown, the remainder of which, as well as the nape, is reddish brown. A black streak passes from the base of the beak to the ear-coverts. The white of the chin and cheeks extends so as to form a collar round the hind-neck. Under parts white, relieved by a black patch on either side of the breast. Mantle, wing-coverts and upper tail-coverts pale brown; primaries dusky brown, edged with white on some of the outer shafts. Tail-quills ash-brown, blackish towards the tips, the outermost white. Bill, legs and irides

## KENTISH PLOVER

black. Length, about 6½ inches. Distinguished from Ringed Plover by the lighter colours, incomplete gorget, black bill and legs and smaller size. *Female.* There is no black on the crown, and the marks on the breast are smaller and dark brown in colour. *Young.* Resemble the female, except that the feathers of the upper parts are edged with buff.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor, and a very rare passage-migrant. Nests only on portions of the coasts of Kent and



Kentish Plover

Sussex. Elsewhere occurs as a very rare migrant along the south coast of England, and on the east coast as far north as Yorkshire. To other parts of England, and to Wales and Ireland, a very rare wanderer.

**Habits.**—Very similar to those of the last-described species. The Kentish Plover usually arrives about mid-April, although sometimes earlier, and by the end of September very few remain. For a few weeks before nesting operations commence, the birds congregate in parties along the shore or on the adjacent marshes, and in July old and young flock together, remaining in company until the time of departure, and frequently associating with other waders.

**Food.**—Differs little from that of the Ringed Plover.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a depression in sand or shingle, sometimes among seaweed above high-water mark. *Materials.* Usually none. Sometimes a few bents or stalks.

**Eggs.**—3, rarely 4. Stone-colour to deep buff, spotted, streaked and scrawled with black. *Size.* About 1·25 × ·9 inches. *Time.* May. Where birds are frequently robbed,

eggs may be found as late as August. Distinguished from eggs of Ringed Plover by the scrawl-like character of the markings.

Notes.—A flute-like *pwee* or a soft *pitt-pitt*. Alarm-note. *Tirr, tirr.*

## GOLDEN PLOVER

*Charadrius apricarius*

Description.—*Male*. Upper parts blackish brown, mottled with golden yellow. A white band runs from the forehead over the eye, extending to the flanks. Throat, cheeks, breast and abdomen deep black; under tail-coverts white.

Tail and upper tail-coverts barred with brown, yellow and greyish white. Wing-quills brownish black. Bill black; irides are brownish black; legs greyish black. Length, about 12 inches. *Sexes alike*. After the autumn moult the black parts become white; cheeks, breast and flanks mottled with brown; fore-neck suffused with yellow. Golden mottlings on upper parts



Golden Plover

less bright. *Young*. Plumage very similar to that of the adult in winter, but there is more yellow on the upper parts and the flanks are more mottled.

Distribution.—Resident, winter visitor and a passage-migrant. Breeds sparingly on the moors of Devon and

## GOLDEN PLOVER

Somerset, more numerously in Wales, on its borders, and in north-east Yorkshire. Nests locally on the Pennine range and in the Peak district, northwards and throughout Scotland, including its islands; breeds commonly in suitable localities. In Ireland it is found nesting on the mountains in many parts, and also in the bogs in the west of Connaught.

**Habits.**—Many of our breeding Golden Plovers are no doubt resident within the British Isles, but some birds probably occur as summer visitors. The species reaches us in large numbers as a passage-migrant, and many birds which arrive in autumn appear to stay throughout the winter. Rough moorlands, grassy hill-sides and rough pastures form the summer haunts of the Golden Plover. In autumn there is a general southward movement, and throughout the winter the bird is much more generally distributed, reaching the extreme southern counties of England. The seashore, moorlands, cultivated land and marshes are frequented from autumn to spring. The Golden Plover appears to be much attached to a favourite winter haunt, returning season after season to the same group of fields. The bird often associates with Lapwings in winter, but if disturbed the two species usually separate on the wing.

**Food.**—Worms, insects and their larvae, molluscs, crustaceans and seeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Amongst short heather, moss or in coarse grass, sometimes on comparatively bare ground. *Materials.* A little dry grass, a few sprigs of heather or pieces of rush form the lining of the slight hollow.

**Eggs.**—4. Yellowish stone or cream-colour, occasionally greenish white, blotched and spotted with blackish brown.

**Size.** About 2·07 × 1·4 inches. **Time.** April to June.

**Notes.**—A long mournful *tlui*, also *taludl*, *taludl*, *taludl*.

## GREY PLOVER

*Squatarola squatarola*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts mottled with black and white. Throat, cheeks and breast deep black; abdomen and under tail-coverts white. There is more white on the forehead than in the Golden Plover, and the white area dividing the mottled upper surface from the black parts is wider. Primaries brownish black, the shafts white; upper tail-coverts and tail white, barred with black. Bill black; irides dark brown; legs greyish black. Length, about  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished from the Golden Plover by the absence of yellow on the upper parts. In winter the upper surface is browner, the black on the face and under parts is lost, these becoming white, with the exception of the fore-neck, which is pale greyish brown, with dark mottlings. *Young.* Resemble young of Golden Plover, but the upper tail-coverts are white and the tail more boldly barred. Axillaries black, those of Golden Plover white.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor, also a passage-migrant. Generally distributed along east and south coasts of England. Rarer on the west coast and in Scotland. In Ireland found on all coasts, but uncommon in the south.

**Habits.**—The Grey Plover is almost entirely confined to our shores, where it is usually seen in small parties. It very rarely wanders inland. The young birds are the first to arrive on our coasts in autumn, usually appearing in September, the adults following in October and November. The return passage is nearly over by the end of May. The majority of birds which visit us in autumn pass beyond our shores, but a good many remain to winter, and a few stay throughout the summer.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the preceding species.

**Notes.**—These have been syllabized *kl-ee* or *kleep*, *k-p* and *kl-ee-köp*.

## LAPWING

*Vanellus vanellus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead, crown and the long, erectile crest-feathers black, glossed with green. Eyebrow, sides of face and neck dirty white. A line of black runs under the eye to the nape, which is brown, mottled with white.

Back, wing-coverts and scapulars are brownish green, glossed with blue and purple. Primaries black, the three outermost tipped with greyish white. Upper tail-coverts reddish chestnut; basal half of tail white, remainder black. Chin, throat and upper breast black, rest of under parts white, except the under tail-coverts, which are pale rust-red. Bill black; legs dull pink; irides

hazel. Length, about 12 inches. *Sexes alike*, except that the female has a much shorter crest, and the wings are narrower and less rounded. The black on the throat is absent in both sexes in winter, and the feathers of the upper parts are fringed with buff. *Young.* Resemble the adult in winter dress, but the buff markings of the upper parts are more noticeable.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Also occurs on passage and as a winter visitor. Generally distributed, but said to be decreasing.

**Habits.**—The Lapwing, Peewit, or Green Plover nests on the rough pasture-land of the uplands, also on marshy meadows and ploughed lands, and on commons amongst



Lapwing

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

stunted heather or on dry or boggy moorlands. In winter it becomes more generally dispersed and also more numerous, large numbers reaching us from the Continent in autumn. Many of our breeding birds move coastwards at that time. The Lapwing is a bird which loves the open country, and its nest is invariably placed in a situation from which the bird can detect the approach of an intruder from a considerable distance. In defence of its eggs or young, there are few bolder birds, Rooks, Crows, Jackdaws, Kestrels and other large birds being instantly pursued and driven from the breeding ground. A number of additional nests, or "scraps," are usually found near the true nest. In the breeding season the Peewit is often a sociable species, nesting in scattered colonies of varying size, but many breeding pairs are quite isolated. In winter Lapwings gather into flocks, which sometimes contain many hundreds of birds. Flocking commences as soon as the young are sufficiently strong on the wing.

**Food.**—Insects of various kinds, worms, slugs, molluscs and crustaceans.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* A hollow in the ground amongst short grass, stunted heather or rushes, on a ridge on ploughed land, occasionally amongst shingle, or on dead bracken fronds and stalks on commons. *Materials.* A few pieces of dry grass, rushes or moss, sometimes dry bracken.

**Eggs.**—4, rarely 5. Olive-green, brownish olive or deep buff, spotted and blotched with black. *Size.* About  $1\cdot85 \times 1\cdot35$  inches. *Time.* April to June, sometimes late March.

**Notes.**—Peewit, *pee-wee* or *peet*. Spring call, *will-o-wit*, *pee-weet*.

## TURNSTONE

*Arenaria interpres*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown white, streaked with black; sides of head white. A band of black extends from the eye to the bill, and there is a large black patch beneath the eye and a small white spot at the base of the bill. Lores and throat white. White of head extended to sides of neck, forming a half-collar, above which is a black band extending downwards and joining the black breast. The back and wings chestnut, variegated with black; lower back white, as are also the under parts below the breast. Rump black; central tail feathers black, remainder dark grey and tipped with white. The wing is crossed by a white bar. Bill black; legs orange; irides very dark brown. Length, about 8 inches. *Sexes alike.* This bird may be readily recognized by its black, white and brown plumage, short, yellow legs and conical, pointed bill. In winter the head and upper parts are dark brown, the crown showing dark striations; cheeks greyish brown. There is a whitish patch beneath the eye. Breast blackish brown. *Young.* Plumage resembles that of the adult in winter, but the upper parts are spotted with greyish white and the tail is tipped with buff.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant and also winter visitor. Often remains throughout the summer. Widely distributed around all our coasts and occasionally seen inland.



Photo : Jasper Atkinson

Turnstone

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Habits.**—The Turnstone is partial to rocky coasts, where it often associates with Purple Sandpipers. It may also be observed along sandy shores and on mud-flats. This bird is most numerous during the spring and autumn migrations, but a considerable number winter with us, especially in the south of England and Ireland. Immigrants commence to arrive late in July and continue to reach us until mid-November. The return migration extends from March to early June. Most of the birds seen in winter and summer are immature.

**Food.**—Sand-hoppers, shrimps, molluscs, small crabs, insects.

**Note.**—Described as a long chuckling twitter.

### RUFF

*Philomachus pugnax*

**Description.**—*Male.* Plumage very variable between April and June, hardly two birds being alike. Around the neck is an almost circular frill of feathers, and on the head are two erectile tufts, or "ears." These ornaments display a most remarkable range of colours. The frill, or "ruff," may be red, brown, black, white, buff or purple, either uniform in colour or streaked, spotted or barred. The tufts may be similar in colour to the ruff or of a different shade. The back, wings and breast also vary much in colour. There is a good deal of white on the upper tail-coverts, which is apparently always present in both sexes. Bill brown; legs yellowish brown, but both vary in colour. Irides brownish, but variable. Length, about  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Female.* Feathers of upper surface blackish, with a purplish gloss, and edged with greyish white or buff. Neck, flanks and breast grey, mottled with black; rest of under surface white. There are no ornamental feathers on the head and neck. Length, about 10 inches. In winter both sexes are greyish brown

## RUFF

above, the feathers having paler margins. The white patch on either side of the tail is retained. Under parts white, the neck and breast streaked. *Young.* Plumage resembles that of the adult female in summer, but the white on the under surface is suffused with buff.

**Distribution.** — Passage-migrant, occasionally seen in summer and winter. Nested in Norfolk in 1907 and in 1922, and has possibly recently done so in that county in other years. As a passage-migrant much more often noticed in autumn than in spring. More frequent on east coast of Great Britain than on west side. In Ireland decidedly rare, even in autumn.

**Habits.** — The Ruff, or the Reeve (female), is a regular although not an abundant visitor on migration. Formerly it nested commonly in the marshland of the eastern counties. During the passage movements it occurs from April to early June, and on the return journey from the latter part of July to October or early November. Most of the birds observed in the autumn are immature. During the nesting season the males have a curious habit of assembling at chosen places where they dance and fight in the presence of the onlooking females.

**Food.** — Insects, worms, and seeds of aquatic plants.

**Nest.** — *Situation.* Well concealed in thick grass or other coarse vegetation growing on swampy ground. *Materials.* Dead grasses or leaves line the hollow in which the eggs are laid.



Photo Monsieur A. Burdet  
Reeve on Nest

**Eggs.**—4. Pale greyish green, olive-green or olive-brown, sometimes stone-colour, boldly blotched and spotted with blackish or reddish brown, the underlying markings being ash-grey. **Size.** About 1·7 × 1·22 inches. **Time.** May and June. Somewhat like those of the Redshank.

**Notes.**—Described as *kack, kack, kick, kack* and *tu-whit*. Also said to emit a loud shrill whistle.

### SANDERLING

*Crocethia alba*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts chestnut, streaked with black on the head and neck, the wings and back showing black, grey and white markings. There is a good deal of white on the tail-coverts, and a white bar is conspicuous on the expanded wing. Fore-neck and fore-part of flanks chestnut-red, the neck spotted with black; rest of under parts white. Bill and legs black; irides dark brown. Length, about 8 inches. *Sexes alike.* The absence of black on the under parts distinguishes the bird from the Dunlin. In winter the upper parts are light ash-grey, with darker shaft-streaks; quills greyish brown. Forehead and sides of head white, as are also the under parts. Plumage in winter whiter than that of any other wader. *Young.* Plumage like that of the adult in winter, but the mantle is mottled with black and white and the upper breast is buffish white.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor and also passage-migrant. Common and widely distributed on sandy coasts throughout the British Isles, except in the west of Scotland, where it is scarce.

**Habits.**—The Sanderling is most numerous in spring and autumn, but a good many birds remain throughout the winter, and non-breeding birds are not uncommon in summer. The autumn passage birds reach us by the end of July, and

## KNOT

may be observed until mid-November, the spring migration lasting from April to mid-June. During the passage movements the bird occurs not infrequently at inland waters. This wader, as its name suggests, is a bird of the sands, and is seldom met with about estuaries or along muddy or rocky portions of the coast. It frequently fraternizes with Dunlins, Ringed Plovers and other small shore birds. The Sanderling is a somewhat silent bird, and unless alarmed, seldom utters a note beyond a subdued twittering while feeding.

**Food.**—Worms, small crustaceans, insects.

**Notes.**—A sharp *whit, whit* or *swink, swink*.

## KNOT

*Calidris canutus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown and hind-neck reddish brown, streaked with black; mantle dark brown, mottled with chestnut, some of the feathers having pale margins. Primaries and secondaries greyish black; lower back ash-grey; upper tail-coverts white, variegated with black and chestnut. Cheeks, throat and under parts rich chestnut. In some birds the abdomen and under tail-coverts are more or less white. The short bill is black; irides dark brown; legs dark olive. Length, about 10 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the upper parts are ash-grey, streaked on the crown and some of the scapulars with dark grey. Tail-coverts white, barred with black; breast ash-grey, with dark streaks. Under parts below the breast white, barred with grey on the flanks. A white bar on the wing is noticeable. *Young.* Resemble the adults in winter dress, but are barred with black and buff on the upper parts. The under surface is buffish white, streaked with brown on the throat and breast.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor and also passage-migrant. Most abundant on east coast of Great Britain, but a common

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visitor to south and west coasts of England. Common in the Solway area, but scarce north of the Clyde. In Ireland, common on north and east coasts, but uncommon elsewhere.

**Habits.**—The Knot is present on our coasts in very large numbers during the spring and autumn passage, and is occasionally seen inland. Many birds remain throughout the winter, and in summer non-breeding birds are not uncommon. Stretches of sand or mud are favoured by this gregarious species, which may be distinguished from most other waders by its short bill and legs and rotund appearance. On their arrival on our shores, Knots are usually very tame, but if much disturbed by shore-shooters, quickly become suspicious of danger. Where food is abundant, the flocks, especially in autumn, are sometimes enormous, and may even contain thousands of birds, which are often packed closely together on the sands.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the other shore-waders.

**Notes.**—*Knut* or *knot*. The blended notes of a large number of birds produce a twittering sound.

### DUNLIN

*Calidris alpina*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts reddish brown, streaked and mottled with black. Wing-coverts ash-grey; quills dusky black, some of the lesser ones brownish, edged with greyish white. Upper tail-coverts white; tail-quills ash-brown, edged with grey, the two central feathers excepted, these being dusky brown. Chin white; upper breast greyish white, streaked with black; lower breast and part of abdomen black; rest of under parts white. Bill and legs black; irides dark brown. Length, about 7½ inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the upper parts are ash-brown, streaked with dark grey; under parts white, except for an indistinct dusky breast-band. *Young.* Brown above, with sandy rufous

## DUNLIN

edges to the feathers. Under parts white, with dusky spots on the breast, which is suffused with buff.

**Distribution.**—Resident, summer and winter visitor, and passage-migrant. Breeds sparingly in Wales and from the Derbyshire Peak northwards. In Scotland it nests more abundantly, and its breeding area includes the Orkneys and Shetlands and most of the Hebridean islands. Occasionally it breeds in the south-west of England. In Ireland small numbers nest in many parts of Ulster, Connaught and Leinster.

**Habits.**—To its breeding haunts the Dunlin is a summer visitor, nesting on the higher moors and also on coast marshes at sea-level. Very large numbers are found on our coasts and about estuaries in spring and autumn. Many birds stay throughout the winter, and non-breeding birds haunt the coast during the summer months. The large flocks occurring in spring and autumn are doubtless composed largely of passage-migrants. The Dunlin occurs at inland waters during the spring and autumn passage, and also in winter. This wader is a gregarious migrant, and the flocks are sometimes enormous. It associates with other small coast-waders. The male bird assists in incubation to some extent, and the brooding bird usually sits fairly closely. A number of "scrapes" are made before egg-laying commences.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, worms and small molluscs.



Dunlin

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a tussock of coarse grass or concealed by heather, usually well hidden. *Materials.* Bents and dry grasses.

**Eggs.**—4, sometimes only 3. Pale greenish, cream or buff of varying shades, blotched and spotted with reddish and blackish brown. Underlying markings grey. *Size.* About 1·3 × ·95 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Call.* Kwee-kwee, trui or pe-pe-pe *Alarm.* Purre.

### CURLEW-SANDPIPER

*Calidris ferruginea*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts chestnut, streaked and barred with black and mottled with grey. Wings ash-grey, the coverts margined with white. The white upper tail-coverts are barred with black. Cheeks, neck and under parts rich mahogany red, the breast and flank feathers fringed with grey. The abdomen and under tail-coverts are more or less white in some birds. The long, black bill is slightly curved downwards; irides brown; legs black. Length, about 8 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the upper parts are greyish brown, the feathers of the back having whitish edges. Face pale brown; lower rump, upper tail-coverts and under parts white. *Young.* Resemble the adults in their winter dress, but the mantle is much darker, the breast tinged with buff, and there is a good deal of buff apparent on the upper parts.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant. It is most frequently noticed on the east and south coasts of Great Britain; less common in the west, although by no means rare. In Ireland its visits are chiefly to the north and east coasts.

**Habits.**—The Curlew-Sandpiper, or Pigmy Curlew, begins to arrive in July, and the majority of birds have left by the end of October. Very rarely the bird has been observed in

## LITTLE STINT

winter. The spring movement lasts from March until June. Mud-flats and salttings are the favourite haunts of the Curlew-Sandpiper, but it is by no means infrequent inland. Its numbers vary from season to season, and in some years it is quite abundant. Immature birds are generally more numerous than adults. This wader frequently associates with Dunlins and Little Stints.

**Food.**—Insects, worms, small molluscs, crustaceans.

**Notes.**—*Twee, twee, twee or tweety, tweety, tweet-tweet.* A musical chatter is uttered when the birds are feeding.

## LITTLE STINT

*Calidris minuta*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead white, rest of upper parts reddish brown, streaked and mottled with black. The under parts are white, with the exception of the spotted, rufous breast. Primaries dusky brown, the wing crossed by a white bar. Two central tail feathers black, the rest pale grey. Bill and legs black; irides dark brown. Length, about 6 inches. *Sexes alike.* After the autumn moult the upper parts are ash-grey, and the wings and coverts are greyer than in summer. *Young.* Plumage resembles that of the adult in summer, but the back and mantle are darker. There is a white stripe over the eye, and the breast is tinged with buff. In winter Stints may be distinguished from Dunlins by their small size and the shorter bill.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant. Occurs chiefly on the east and south-east coasts of England, and in south-east Scotland. Rarer on south and west coasts, and north of Aberdeen. In Ireland not uncommon in autumn on east coast.

**Habits.**—The autumn passage movements of the Little Stint extend from late July to the beginning of November, and although at this season the bird visits us quite regularly

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

in varying numbers, it is always very scarce in spring. The birds arrive in small parties, and soon join mixed flocks of Dunlins, Curlew-Sandpipers and other small shore-waders. The occurrence of the Little Stint inland is by no means exceptional, it having repeatedly been observed on the shores of lakes and reservoirs, and on sewage farms.

**Food.**—Small crabs, worms, molluses and insects.

**Notes.**—A sharp and rapid *tchick, tchick, tchick* and a low twittering sound.

### TEMMINCK'S STINT

*Calidris temminckii*

**Description.**—*Male.* In general appearance resembles the Little Stint, but is less warmly coloured, the upper parts being of a much greyer brown. Two outer tail feathers white, the rest brownish grey. Breast buff, with dark streaks, rest of under parts white. Bill black; legs olive; irides deep brown. Length, about 5½ inches. *Sexes alike.* After the autumn moult the upper parts are ash-grey, the feathers having pale margins. Breast unstreaked. *Young.* Feathers of upper parts tipped with white, under parts buffish white.

**Distribution.**—Rare passage-migrant, most frequently seen on the south and south-east coasts of England. Rare vagrant elsewhere, although it has occurred in many parts.

**Habits.**—Temminck's Stint visits us chiefly in autumn, but is an irregular migrant, and much rarer than the Little Stint. It occurs from July to September, and less frequently during May. Its habits differ little from those of the commoner species.

**Food.**—Worms, crustaceans, insects and molluses.

**Note.**—Has been described as a spluttering *pt-r-r-r.*

## PURPLE SANDPIPER

*Calidris maritima*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts blackish, glossed with purple, and relieved by pale chestnut bands and spots, and white margins to the feathers. Central tail feathers black, the rest grey, the outermost narrowly edged with white. Throat white; breast and flanks greyish, with dusky streaks; under tail-coverts white, streaked with black. A white patch is very noticeable on the wing when the bird is flying. Bill orange at the base, dark towards the tip; legs yellow; irides nearly black. Length, about 8½ inches. *Sexes alike* In winter the upper parts are much darker than in summer, the greater part of the chestnut being lost after the autumn moult, and the feathers show grey edges. *Breast* and flanks mottled and streaked with dusky brown. *Young.* Plumage resembles the summer dress of the adult, but the feathers of the upper parts are fringed with buff and white.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor, also occurs as a passage-migrant. Widely dispersed around all our coasts, especially along those of a rocky nature. Occasionally seen inland.

**Habits.**—Purple Sandpipers begin to arrive on our coasts early in August and continue to reach us until mid-October. The return migration covers the period from mid-March to early June. This wader frequents wild rocky shores in small parties, and is usually fairly abundant in suitable spots. It occasionally appears in large numbers, and then becomes more widely distributed. At low tide Purple Sandpipers haunt rock-pools and seaweed-covered rocks, where they diligently search for food, often fraternizing with Turnstones and sometimes other waders. This bird is comparatively silent, but during flight utters a low piping whistle. It is tamer than most waders, and even when associating with the more wary of its congeners, will remain while the shyer birds take flight.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Food.**—Small crustaceans, molluses and insects found amongst seaweed and rocks.

**Notes.**—Weet-wit or tee-wit.

### COMMON SANDPIPER

*Tringa hypoleucos*

**Description.**—*Male.* The upper parts are greenish brown, streaked on the crown and neck with dark brown. The feathers of the back show dark arrow-shaped markings. Primaries nearly black; a white bar is conspicuous on the extended wing. Outer tail feathers white, barred with brown. Cheeks and neck light brown, streaked with black; a line over the eye, chin and under parts white, with the exception of the fore-breast, which resembles the neck. Bill dark brown at tip, lighter at base; irides dusky brown; legs bluish green. Length, about 8 inches.  
*Sexes alike.* Young. Closely resemble adults, but some of the feathers of the upper parts show light markings.



Common Sandpiper

Scotland and its islands, Wales, in most parts of Ireland, and in all the northern counties of England; it is also fairly common in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. Elsewhere common as a passage-migrant in spring and autumn, but has nested in some of the southern and eastern counties of England.

**Habits.**—The Common Sandpiper, or Summer Snipe

## COMMON SANDPIPER

arrives in April, a few birds appearing in the first week of that month, the movement continuing until the end of May. The return migration begins in August, and although a few birds may linger until early October, or even later, the majority leave during September. The margins of lakes and lochs, rivers and mountain-streams with rocky banks or islets of shingle form the summer haunts of this dainty little bird. Towards the end of July, old and young birds leave the uplands and gradually work their way southwards, pausing for rest and food on the edges of estuaries, lakes, reservoirs and rivers. When migrating this species is somewhat gregarious, often travelling in small parties, and sometimes joining Dunlins and other small waders. If alarmed this Sandpiper jerks its tail and moves the head with a curious bobbing action, and on taking wing seldom fails to utter its shrill, whistling cry. The flight is rapid, and the bird's course is generally just above the surface of the water.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvae, small crustaceans and worms.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In patches of grass growing amongst shingle, in tufts of rushes, in a hole in a bank or amongst undergrowth in woods. Usually on the bank of a stream, river or lake. *Materials.* The slight hollow is lined with dry grasses, rushes or dead leaves.

**Eggs.**—4. Cream-colour to rich buff, spotted and speckled with varying shades of reddish brown; underlying markings grey. *Size.* About  $1\cdot5 \times 1\cdot08$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Note.**—A shrill, musical whistle. This has been written *wheet, wheet, wheet, or weet-wince*

## WOOD-SANDPIPER

*Tringa glareola*

**Description.**—*Male.* In general appearance resembles the Green Sandpiper, but is a smaller and slimmer bird. The white spots on the upper parts are larger and more numerous, and the flanks are more barred. Length, about 8½ inches.  
*Sexes alike.*

**Distribution.**—Regular passage-migrant. Occurs chiefly in east and south-east of England, but is not very unusual in the south and west. Rare in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Nested on Prestwick Carr, Northumberland, in 1853.

**Habits.**—The Wood-Sandpiper usually occurs singly, but sometimes in flocks, and is more numerous in autumn than in spring. It may be observed from July to October, and during April and May, but does not winter in the British Isles. In its choice of a haunt, this species differs little from the Green Sandpiper, and although it frequents pools, streams and marshes near the coast, is not often met with on the open shore. It also occurs inland.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, molluscs, worms.

**Notes.**—*Alarm.* *Tyu, tyu, tyu*, not unlike that of the Redshank, but softer in sound.

## GREEN SANDPIPER

*Tringa ochropus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck and breast greyish brown, streaked with white; chin white. Back and wings dark bronze-green, with numerous small white spots. Upper tail-coverts white; tail feathers white, barred with black, the outer pair excepted. Upper flanks barred with olive-green; under parts white. Bill dark brown; irides blackish; legs green. Length, about 9½ inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* The spots on the upper parts are buff, and the feathers of the mantle show light margins.

## COMMON REDSHANK

**Distribution.**—Spring and also autumn passage-migrant, sometimes remaining throughout the summer, and occasionally occurring in winter. May be observed in all parts of the British Isles, but is more frequent in England and Wales than in Scotland and Ireland.

**Habits.**—The favourite resorts of the Green Sandpiper are the margins of lakes, ponds, rivers and streams. It is usually met with singly, and being a shy and wary species, generally chooses some secluded spot. This wader is seldom found on the coast. When disturbed it usually rises to a considerable height and flies rapidly to some safe retreat. The same pond or river-haunt is sometimes chosen year after year, and the bird often remains at a favoured spot for many days.

**Food.**—Small molluscs, insects, fresh-water snails, crustaceans and vegetable matter.

**Note.**—A clear, loud whistle, usually repeated several times as the bird flies away. This note sounds something like *kee-lee*.

## COMMON REDSHANK

*Tringa totanus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts greyish brown, with darker streaks of the same colour on the crown and hind-neck. The mantle is blotched and barred with dark slaty brown. Lower back and rump white; tail-coverts white, barred with black. Central tail feathers brown, the remainder white, and all barred with black. Outer primaries blackish; secondaries white, which together with the white inner primaries form a conspicuous edging to the wing. Under parts greyish white, streaked on the neck and breast and barred on the flanks with dark grey. Bill reddish at base, dusky at tip; legs red; irides blackish brown. Length, about 11 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the upper parts are

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greyer and the under surface is faintly barred and streaked. *Young.* Upper parts are darker than in the adult, and are streaked and spotted with buff. Tail more heavily barred, and the markings on the breast and flanks more pronounced.

Legs yellow.

**Distribution.**—Summer resident, passage-migrant and also winter visitor.

Breeds in most of the suitable localities throughout the British Isles, in many inland districts as well as near the coast. Has increased in recent years as a breeding species, this being especially the case in the inland places.

**Habits.**—The Common Redshank nests on coastal marshes and saltings, in marshy inland meadows, on boggy commons and swampy shores of mountain tarns and lochs. In autumn it is found in large numbers on mud-flats, saltings

Common Redshank

and sandy stretches all round the coast, and in such localities considerable numbers sometimes remain to winter. A general southward movement occurs after the breeding season, and in April and May there is a marked northward migration. Many birds arrive at their nesting quarters during March. The Redshank is a noisy bird at most times, but especially so in the breeding season after the young are hatched. During the incubation period it is often much less demonstrative, the sitting bird flying silently from the nest on receiving a warning note from its mate. A gregarious bird at all seasons, many pairs may be found breeding within a limited area of suitable ground.

## SPOTTED REDSHANK

**Food.**—Aquatic insects and their larvae, earthworms, crustaceans, small molluscs, and shoreworms.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground, sheltered by coarse grass, rushes or heather. Usually well concealed, but sometimes in quite open situations. Generally in a fairly dry place, but occasionally on very boggy ground. *Materials.* A few blades of grass or a little moss, but the depression is often without lining.

**Eggs.**—4. Sometimes 3. Pale straw-colour to buffish brown, spotted, blotched and streaked with reddish or purplish brown; underlying markings light brown or purplish grey. *Size.* About 1·78 × 1·23 inches. *Time.* Late March to May.

**Notes.**—A shrill yelping *teuk teuk, teuk*, when alarmed. *Call.* A plaintive *tee-u* or *tu-oo-ee*. A musical trill is uttered during the breeding season.

## SPOTTED REDSHANK

*Tringa erythropus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts greyish black, spotted with white on the back and wings, which are tinged with brown. Rump, upper tail-coverts and tail barred with black and white. Cheeks, throat and under parts uniform greyish black, except the under tail-coverts, which are barred with black and white. Bill dark brown, dull red at base; legs dark red; irides brown. Bill and legs longer than those of Common Redshank. Length, about 12 inches. *Sexes are alike.* In winter the upper parts are grey, spotted with white; secondaries white, barred with black and greyish brown, those of the Common Redshank being wholly white. Cheeks white, streaked with grey; under surface white. Legs much brighter red than in summer. *Young.* Upper parts resemble those of the adult in winter plumage, but are browner. Under

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

parts greyer, with dark markings on the throat, breast and flanks.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant. Uncommon and irregular. Occurs chiefly on coast from Kent to Yorkshire, less frequently on the south and west coasts of England. Rare inland. Very rarely visits Scotland and Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Spotted, or Dusky Redshank, visits us both in spring and autumn, and is occasionally seen in winter. It may be looked for from late April to June, and again during the return migration from August to October. The habits of the rarer species differ very little from those of the Common Redshank.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the Common Redshank.

**Note.**—Mr. C. Oldham has described the note as *tchuet.*

In Howard Saunders's "Manual of British Birds" it is written  
*tjeuty.*

### GREENSHANK

*Tringa nebularia*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, nape and sides of neck light grey, streaked with dark brown. Back greenish black, many of the feathers edged with white or grey and blotched with black; primaries black. Rump and tail white, the former barred and mottled with ash-brown. Under parts white, the breast and flanks streaked and spotted with ash-grey. Bill blackish, and slightly upturned; legs olive-green; irides, hazel. Length, about 13 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the upper parts are greyer and the under surface less streaked. *Young.* Upper parts blackish brown, the feathers margined with buff. In other respects the plumage closely resembles that of the adult in summer dress.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and passage-migrant. A few birds remain during the winter, chiefly in the west and south-west of Ireland. Breeds in small numbers in the north and west of the Scottish mainland, and in the Hebrides.

## GREENSHANK

Elsewhere occurs during migration along all our coasts, and not infrequently at inland waters. More numerous in autumn than in spring.

**Habits.**—The Greenshank sometimes arrives on the coast in mid-February, and the passage movement continues until the close of May. The autumn migration lasts from July or August until October. The bird occurs regularly, but is seldom seen in large numbers, appearing singly or in small parties. The nesting haunts of the Greenshank are on wild moorlands, usually in the vicinity of lochs. This species is less sociable than the Common Redshank, the breeding pairs usually keeping some distance apart. The nest is by no means easily discovered, the incubating bird receiving warning from its ever alert mate on the approach of an intruder, when it at once leaves the eggs, and flies to a considerable distance before venturing to alight.

**Food.**—Shoreworms, insects and their larvae, shrimps, small fish, sand-eels.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* A depression in mossy ground, or among coarse grass or heather. Sometimes sheltered by a piece of rock. Usually near water. *Materials.* A little dry grass or moss.

**Eggs.**—4. Pale yellowish green or pale buff to warm stone-colour, boldly spotted and blotched with reddish brown or dark brown, with underlying markings of purplish grey. *Size.* About  $1\cdot95 \times 1\cdot35$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—A loud *chee-weet, chee-weet* or *choo, choo, choo*.



Photo : A. Brook

Greenshank

## GREY PHALAROPE

*Phalaropus fulicarius*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, nape and chin dark slate; back and wings brownish black, streaked with buff. Under parts warm chestnut; cheeks and a line above the eye white. A white bar crosses the wing. Bill yellow, dusky at tip; legs greenish yellow; irides brown. Length, about 8 inches.  
*Female.* More brightly coloured. The chestnut colouring of both sexes gradually disappears in autumn, and in winter the forehead, crown and whole of under parts are white. Upper surface pearl-grey, darker on the mottled wings, which retain the white bar. There is a dark patch around the eye, and the nape is slate-grey. Bill black; legs dark grey.  
*Young.* Plumage intermediate between the summer and winter dress of the adult.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant. Occasionally observed in winter. Usually a scarce and irregular visitor to all our coasts. Most frequently noticed in the south and south-west of England. Sometimes occurs inland. Visits us periodically in large numbers.

**Habits.**—The Grey Phalarope is most frequently met with in small numbers on the coast from September to early November, and consequently most of the birds which reach us are in autumn or winter plumage. The bird is not often recorded during the spring passage. This species and the Red-necked Phalarope are much more aquatic than any of the other waders, and their feet being lobed like those of the Coot, the birds are able to swim with ease. Grey Phalaropes are usually very tame, and may be approached with the greatest ease. The autumn migrants sometimes occur in small parties.

**Food.**—Chiefly insects and their larvæ, also crustaceans.

**Notes.**—Described as a sharp *tweet*, a low *clink*, *clink*, or a rapid *zhit-zhit*.

## RED-NECKED PHALAROPE

*Phalaropus lobatus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, hind-neck, back, wing-coverts, scapulars and tertials dark ash-grey, the two last-named tipped with rust-colour. Rump and upper tail-coverts dusky, banded with white; tail brownish grey, darkest in the centre; primaries dusky, some of which have white tips. Chin white; fore-part and sides of neck rust-red; upper breast grey, barred with white; under parts white. Bill black; legs green; irides dark brown. Length, about 8 inches. *Female.* Rather more brightly coloured, and further distinguished by a white spot over the eye, this being represented by a white streak in the male. After the autumn moult the sexes are very similar. The forehead, cheeks, throat and under parts are then white. The hind-part of head and eye-streak or spot are dark brown, the upper parts mottled with buff and white. The adult in winter plumage, but the upper parts are warmer in tint.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and rare passage-migrant. Occasionally seen in winter. Breeds in small numbers in the Orkneys, Shetlands, Outer Hebrides, and in Tiree (Inner Hebrides). Nests in one locality in the west of Ireland, and in 1924 it was found breeding in Co. Donegal. Outside its breeding areas of only casual occurrence, most frequently seen, although rarely, on the south and east coasts of England. It is not often seen inland, except in the breeding season.

**Habits.**—This Phalarope usually arrives at its nesting places



Red-necked Phalarope  
(Female)

**Young.** Resemble the adult in winter plumage, but the upper parts are warmer in tint.

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late in May or in early June, and the return migration is undertaken in August. The birds are gregarious at their breeding haunts, and remarkably tame, the task of approaching them by wading into the pools they frequent being by no means difficult. In the duty of incubation the usual order of things is reversed, the male bird undertaking this work, or at all events the major portion. The female bird is said to take the initiative in courtship, but males have been observed performing a courting display in the presence of the hen. The care of the young devolves upon the male bird, but the female will mount guard and warn her mate if danger threatens. The breeding haunts of the Red-necked Phalarope are on moors and mountains, and in the neighbourhood of a loch or pool.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, worms, and fresh-water crustaceans.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground in a tussock of grass or in a hollow on the top of a small hillock. *Materials.* Fine dead grass or stalks and roots of water-plants

**Eggs.**—4. Olive-green to light buffish brown, spotted and blotched with blackish brown or dark chocolate. The markings are generally more numerous at the broader end. *Size.* About  $1\cdot1 \times .83$  inches. *Time.* June.

**Notes.**—*Chiss-ick, pleep-pleep, or wit-wit-wit.*

## AVOCET

*Recurvirostra avosetta*

**Description.**—*Male.* Top of head and hind-neck black. There are two long curved black bands on the back. Wing-coverts black, the major coverts excepted, which are white; primaries black. Rest of plumage white. The black beak is long, slender, and curved upwards; irides reddish brown; legs pale bluish grey. Length, about 18 inches. *Sexes*

## AVOCET

ike. Young. The areas which are black in the adult are brownish, and the white parts are washed with pale brown.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant. Occurs fairly regularly in spring, but is rarer during the autumn migration. Its visits are mainly confined to the coasts of Norfolk, Kent and Sussex. Elsewhere a vagrant. A century ago this bird nested from the Humber to Sussex.

**Habits.**—The small parties of Avocets which visit us, presumably on their way to the breeding grounds in Holland and Denmark, unfortunately only too frequently attract the attention of gunners, except at Breydon, Norfolk, where they are afforded protection.

The bird delights to haunt the pools along the shore, in which it often wades deeply. It can swim well, although the feet are only partially webbed, and will alight on the water from choice, although it may also do so when seeking safety. When feeding the Avocet scoops the surface of the mud or water with a sideways movement of its upturned bill, which is admirably adapted for this purpose. The birds which visit us are usually shy, as in few localities are they long left unmolested for any length of time.

**Food.**—Mainly aquatic insects and small crustaceans.

**Notes.**—A clear *kluit*, or *tweet, tweet, tweet*.



Avocet

## BAR-TAILED GODWIT

*Limosa lapponica*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown and neck chestnut, streaked with brownish black. The feathers of the mantle are also chestnut, but their dark centres largely obscure the brighter colouring. Rump and upper tail-coverts white, streaked with black, except the hind-coverts, which are reddish, and broadly barred with black. Central tail feathers pale rufous, remainder white, and all barred with black. Wing-coverts greyish brown; primaries deep-brown. Under parts bright chestnut. The upturned bill is flesh-coloured, tipped with black; legs greyish black; irides dark brown. Length, about 15 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the chestnut is entirely absent, the upper parts are then ash-grey, the feathers edged with white and streaked with dark brown. Lower breast and abdomen white, rest of under parts ash-grey, with dark streaks and spots. Tail feathers uniform grey or faintly barred, upper coverts barred with brown. Distinguished from the Black-tailed Godwit in winter by its smaller size and shorter legs. *Young.* Plumage resembles that of the adult in winter dress, but is browner, the tail is barred and the breast buff.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor and also passage-migrant. Generally distributed around all coasts, and more abundant than the black-tailed species.

**Habits.**—The spring migration of the Bar-tailed Godwit extends from April to mid-June, and the autumn passage lasts from the middle of July to November. A good many birds remain with us in flocks throughout the winter, and not a few non-breeders are present all through the summer. This Godwit is a coast-haunting bird, and is rarely seen inland. The autumn flocks, consisting of both adult and immature birds, are sometimes very large.

**Food.**—Worms, crustaceans, molluscs.

**Notes.**—*Kew-it* or *low-eet*, also a barking note.

## BLACK-TAILED GODWIT

*Limosa limosa*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck and mantle reddish brown, streaked and mottled with black; lower back black; upper tail-coverts and basal half of tail feathers white, remainder black. The primaries are black, and a white bar is noticeable on the extended wing, the latter feature distinguishing this bird from the bar-tailed species. Throat white; breast bay-coloured; flanks reddish brown, shading to whitish; abdomen and under tail-coverts white. The breast and flanks are barred with black. Bill is pinkish and dusky towards tip; legs greenish black; irides brown. Length, about 17 inches.  
*Sexes alike.* The upper parts are greyish brown in winter, fore-neck and breast grey, abdomen whitish. Wings, lower back and tail as in summer.  
*Young.* Plumage of upper parts like that of the adult in summer; under parts buff.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant Occurs chiefly during the autumn, less frequently in spring, and may occasionally be observed in winter and summer. Most frequent on the east coast of England from the Humber southwards, and on south coast. Rarer north of the Humber and on whole of the west side of Great Britain. Occurs with some frequency in Ireland. Formerly nested from South Yorkshire to Norfolk; the last nest appears to have been taken about 1847.

**Habits.**—The Black-tailed Godwit is much more locally distributed than the preceding species, and is a much more uncertain visitor. It is a gregarious migrant, and often



Black-tailed Godwit

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associates with the commoner bird, its haunts being similar, and in habits both species have much in common.

**Food.**—Marine worms, small shell-fish and crustaceans

**Note.**—The call is somewhat like that of the Redshank. It has been described as *djo, djo, djo.*

### CURLEW

*Numenius arquata*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts mainly pale brown, streaked with dark brown, but the lower back and rump are white, and slightly streaked. There is a distinct pale eye-stripe. Primaries black, marked with light brown on

the inner webs. Upper tail-coverts are white, and marked with dark brown; tail barred with buffish white and dark brown. Chin is white; throat and upper breast are a very pale brown, streaked with dark brown; rest of under parts white, spotted on the belly and the lower



Curlew

breast with blackish brown. The long bill is curved downwards, and dark brown in colour; legs bluish grey; irides hazel. Length, about 22 inches. *Sexes alike* in plumage, but female larger. *Young.* Very similar to the adult, but more rufous on the upper parts. Under parts more streaked.

**Distribution.**—Resident, passage-migrant and a winter visitor. Breeds sparingly in Somerset, Dorset, Wilts, Hants, Surrey, Norfolk and Lincs, more commonly in Devon and Cornwall. Nests fairly freely in Wales and the adjoining counties, the Isle of Man, Derbyshire and Staffordshire, and

## CURLEW

commonly northwards. Breeds numerously in Scotland on the mainland and islands, but apparently not in the Outer Hebrides. Nests in suitable localities throughout Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Curlew arrives at its breeding places early in March, and the birds begin to depart in the middle of July, all having left by the close of the following month. It is common on all coasts as a migrant in spring and autumn, and also as a winter visitor. A number of birds remain on the shore throughout the summer. During the migratory movements the bird is frequently seen inland. The breeding haunts of the Curlew are on moors, bogs and rough undrained pasture-land of the uplands. So long as the nest contains eggs the birds are not very demonstrative, but after their young are hatched the adults become very noisy, their harsh yelping cries continuing while danger threatens. The Curlew is gregarious on the coast, and the flocks of migrating birds are sometimes very large.

**Food.**—Earthworms, snails, insects and their larvae, molluscs and berries.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst coarse grass, rushes or heather; sometimes made on quite bare ground.

*Materials.* Small pieces of dead rushes, withered grass or dead leaves.

**Eggs.**—4, sometimes only 3. Olive-green to brownish buff, sometimes light green, spotted and blotched with dark green and umber-brown. Underlying markings light ash-brown.  
*Size.* About 2·65 × 1·85 inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—*Cour-lie* or *cour-lew*. When the bird is alarmed the notes sound like *gurleck* or *guck, guck, guck*. A musical trill is heard in the nesting season.

## WHIMBREL

*Numenius phaeopus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown dark brown, with a light streak in the centre. A second light streak runs from the base of the bill over the eye and ear-coverts. Apart from

the above described features, the plumage bears a general resemblance to that of the Curlew, while the brown bill is shorter and rather less curved. Legs dull slate-grey; irides dark brown. Length, about 16 inches. The bird may further be distinguished from the Curlew by its small size. *Sexes alike* in plumage, but the female is the larger bird. *Young.* The ground-colour of the wing-coverts is buff,



*Photo: Ralph Chislett*

Whimbrel

instead of white, as in the adult, and the rump more or less streaked. Dark mottlings more inclined to black.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and passage-migrant, a few birds remaining during winter. A few pairs breed in the Orkneys and Shetlands, and possibly in the Outer Hebrides. As a passing migrant the bird is found on all coasts, and is often seen inland. A few non-breeding birds are observed on the shore in summer.

**Habits.**—The Whimbrel arrives in April or May, and the return passage lasts from the end of July to October, or even November. The breeding haunts of this bird are on moorlands, and in spring and autumn it frequents low rocky shores and mud-flats. The Whimbrel commences nesting a week

## GREAT SNIPE

or two later than the Curlew, and differs in its behaviour at the nest, becoming noisy when disturbed from the eggs. This species occasionally perches on trees or rails, a habit which is not unusual in the case of the Curlew. The Whimbrel, "Titterel," or "May-bird" is a bold species in defence of its nest, pursuing and driving away gulls and other birds which venture on to the breeding territory.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the Curlew.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst heather or sheltered by a tuft of grass, or on a hillock in a marsh.

*Materials.* Mosses, bents, lichens or dry grass.

**Eggs.**—4. Olive-green to olive-brown, blotched and spotted with varying shades of brown and light grey. *Size.* About 2·35 × 1·65 inches. *Time.* May and June. Smaller than those of the Curlew, and rather larger and more pear-shaped than eggs of Richardson's Skua, but they may be confused with the eggs of both these species.

**Notes.**—*Call.* *Tetty, tetty, tetty, tet.* The alarm-note has been written *gück, gück*. The breeding trill is said to resemble the Curlew's, except that it is softer.

## GREAT SNIPE

*Capella media*

**Description.**—*Male.* General coloration very similar to that of the Common Snipe. The white tips to the outer tail feathers, however, are distinctive; the flanks and under parts are more heavily barred, and the wing-coverts conspicuously tipped with white. A more heavily built bird than the common species. Length, about 11 inches. *Sexes alike.*

**Distribution.**—An uncommon passage-migrant. It occurs most often in autumn, and chiefly in the southern and eastern counties of England. It has, however, been recorded from many other districts, but is rare in Scotland and Ireland.

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**Habits.**—The haunts of the Great Snipe differ in some respects from those of the two other species, for although the bird frequents marshy spots, it is often met with in dry situations, and will even resort to woods. This Snipe is most frequently noticed from August to October. During the spring migration, when it is much less often seen, it generally occurs in the first half of May. The flight is slower and straighter than that of the Common Snipe. A silent bird during its visits to the British Isles, even failing to utter an alarm cry on being flushed.

**Food.**—Worms, small snails, insects and their larvæ.

### COMMON SNIPE

*Capella gallinago*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown blackish brown, divided by a buffish brown longitudinal line. A similarly coloured streak passes from the base of the bill over the eyes, and a dusky line runs from the base of the beak to the eye. Back dark brown, with rusty brown bars. On the upper parts of the body there are four distinct lines of bright buff. Primaries dull black, some of which are edged and others tipped with white. Tail black, barred and spotted with dull orange-red and tipped with pale reddish yellow. Chin brownish grey ; front and sides of neck mottled with brown ; flanks barred with brown and white. Under parts white, except the under tail-coverts, which are pale



Common Snipe

with brown ; flanks barred with brown and white. Under parts white, except the under tail-coverts, which are pale

## COMMON SNIPE

brown, barred with black. The long bill is horn-colour, darker at tip. Legs greenish brown; irides dark brown. Length, about 10 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. Lack the longitudinal stripes on the back. The forehead is pale brown, indistinctly barred with black.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and also passage-migrant. Breeds locally in suitable localities throughout the British Isles, but is commoner in the north than in the south. In some of the southern counties of England it rarely breeds.

**Habits.**—The Common Snipe frequents marshes and wet meadows, boggy commons, heaths and moors. As a passage-migrant it occurs from March to mid-May, and from September to the end of November. Many birds from overseas remain to winter with us, and at this season the bird is often seen in small parties known as "wisp." Occasionally fifty birds or more may be seen in company. When in flight the Common Snipe produces a sound known as "drumming" or "bleating." This phenomenon is due to the air passing between the expanded tail feathers during the rapid downward flight. The drumming is chiefly heard in the breeding season, but is certainly not confined to this period. This bird is a close sitter, and will often not rise from the nest until nearly trodden upon. The male assists in the feeding and brooding of the chicks.

**Food.**—Largely worms, also insects and their larvæ, and molluscs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On marshy ground amongst rushes, heather or coarse grass. *Materials.* Dry grass and sometimes a few sprigs of heather.

**Eggs.**—4. Pale greenish yellow to olive-green or olive-brown, spotted, blotched and sometimes smeared with blackish brown, light brown and underlying markings of grey. *Size.* About  $1\cdot58 \times 1\cdot1$  inches. *Time.* April and May, but eggs have been found in March and July.

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**Notes.**—*Alarm. Scape.* The call-note sounds like *tjick-tjuck*, and is repeated several times while the bird is at rest or on the wing.

### JACK SNIPE

*Lymnocryptes minimus*

**Description.**—*Male.* The Jack Snipe resembles the Common Snipe in general appearance, but may be distinguished by its much smaller size. The bill is shorter, there is no central stripe of buff on the crown, the rump is glossed with purple and the scapulars with metallic green. Length, about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Sexes alike.*

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor and passage-migrant. Common and widely distributed, but local.

**Habits.**—The Jack Snipe, or Half Snipe, is a regular visitor both as a winter bird and a passage-migrant, arriving in September or October, and leaving at the end of March

or in April, but some birds may remain until late May. Non-breeding birds will stay throughout the summer. This bird appears to be much attached to a favourite haunt, to which it will return season after season. It is less sociable than the Common Snipe, generally occurring singly, in pairs or in small parties. When flushed the Jack Snipe seldom flies far before dropping into cover. Its flight is slower than that of the common species, and it less frequently utters



Jack Snipe

## WOODCOCK

note of alarm on rising. The two birds sometimes associate on the wing, when the difference in size and the much shorter bill of the Jack Snipe are at once apparent. The margins of lakes or ponds, the edges of streams, boggy fields and other moist situations form the resorts of this species.

**Food.**—Apparently very similar to that of the preceding bird.

**Note.**—*Scape.* Not so loud as the alarm-note of the Common Snipe.

## WOODCOCK

*Scolopax rusticola*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts mottled with reddish brown, black and grey, the markings producing a variegated effect. A dark brown streak extends right from the gape to the eye. The back of the head and the nape are both marked by conspicuous transverse black bands. Cheeks and under parts yellowish white, barred with dark wavy lines. The long bill is reddish brown, tipped with dark brown; legs pinkish brown; irides are dark brown. Length is about 15 inches. *Sexes are alike.* *Young.* These closely resemble the adult bird.

**Distribution.**—Resident, passage-migrant and also winter visitor.

As a breeding species the Woodcock is widely distributed in the British Isles, but somewhat local. It is



Woodcock

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numerous in the Lake District, and in the north and central parts of Scotland is common in some wooded districts, and is numerous in suitable places in Ireland. There are few counties where it has not been recorded as occasionally nesting.

**Habits.**—A few immigrant Woodcocks reach us in September, but October and November are the chief months of arrival. The birds commence to return in March, but many winter visitors are still with us after the resident birds have started nesting. The breeding places of the Woodcock are in woods, forests, plantations and coppices containing bracken, bramble and other undergrowth. This bird remains in its woodland haunts during the day, but in the evening seeks its food on marshes, in wet ditches or other moist situations. In winter, should hard frost drive the Woodcock from its inland feeding grounds, a general movement takes place to the coast.

**Food.**—Worms, insects, crustaceans and molluscs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst dead grass or dry bracken, under bramble or amongst dead leaves at the foot of a tree. *Materials.* Dry grass, fern-fronds and dead leaves.

**Eggs.**—4, sometimes only 3. Yellowish white to buffish brown, blotched and spotted rather sparingly with pale chestnut-brown or yellowish brown, and underlying markings of ash-grey. *Size.* About  $1\cdot7 \times 1\cdot35$  inches. *Time.* March to May, sometimes June, or even July.

**Notes.**—*Alarm-note.* Skaych. Other sounds produced by the bird have been written croho, croho and chizzie.

## BLACK TERN

*Chlidonias niger*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck and breast deep black; back, wings and tail slate-grey. The carpal bend of the wing white, as are also the under tail-coverts. Under parts below the breast leaden grey. Bill black; legs reddish brown; irides are nearly black. Length, about 9½ inches. *Sexes alike.* The forehead becomes white after the autumn moult, and the sides of face and neck, a collar round the hind-neck, and the under parts are then also white, more or less spotted or ringed with grey. *Young.* Upper parts grey, mottled with brown and buff; sides of face, nape and patch on the sides of the neck slate-grey. Under parts white. *Immature*

birds require careful identification, but may be distinguished from the young of other terns by their darker upper parts.

**Distribution.**—Passage-migrant. Most numerous in the south of England and in the eastern counties as far north as Yorkshire. Less frequent in the Midlands, Wales, and on the west side of England. Occurs occasionally in Scotland and Ireland. Often seen at inland waters as well as on the coast, formerly bred in the eastern counties of England, and no doubt elsewhere. It is not known to have nested since 1858.

**Habits.**—The Black Tern visits us in spring and autumn. It is most frequently noticed in April, May, August and September, the occurrence of the bird in June, July and October may be regarded as somewhat exceptional. Small



Black Tern

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

flocks are not infrequent, and mixed companies of Black, Common and Lesser Terns are sometimes observed. Most of the birds which reach us in autumn are immature, and large numbers have sometimes been noticed on the east coast of England.

**Food.**—Chiefly aquatic insects and their larvæ.

**Notes.**—*Crick, crick, or creek-crick.*

### SANDWICH TERN

*Sterna sandvicensis*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead,\* crown and nape are black. The feathers of the nape are long and pointed. Back and wings pearl-grey; rump and tail are white. Under parts white, sometimes tinged with salmon-pink. Bill is black, and tipped with yellowish; legs black; irides hazel. Length, about 16½ inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished from the other terns by its larger size, pointed nape feathers and black, yellow-tipped bill. The fore-part of the crown becomes white after the autumn moult, and the nape is then spotted with white. *Young.* Crown barred with brown and white, the wing is marked with an

ash-grey band, and the tail is barred or spotted with black. Bill horn-colour.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor. Breeds at the Farne Islands, at Ravenglass in Cumberland, in Norfolk, and occasionally elsewhere on the English and Welsh coasts. In

\* Bird illustrated not in full breeding plumage.

## SANDWICH TERN

Scotland nests in Kirkcudbright, Wigtownshire, and in the Orkneys; also irregularly on the east coast and in the area of the Clyde. In Ireland there are several breeding stations in Co. Mayo, one colony on Lough Erne, and occasionally other localities are occupied during the nesting season. During migration the bird is observed on many parts of our coasts.

**Habits.**—The Sandwich Tern reaches us earlier than its congeners, the first arrivals appearing towards the end of March or early in April. Very few birds remain with us after the end of September. Nesting operations commence earlier than those of the other terns breeding with us. The colonies vary considerably in size, and may consist of only a few pairs of birds to some hundreds. The nests are placed close together, often not more than a foot apart, and the birds usually nest in two or more groups, but the colony at Ravenglass often contains as many as half a dozen. The Sandwich Tern sometimes shares its breeding ground with its congeners and the Black-headed Gull, but the nests of the different species of terns are placed in separate groups. Incubation is performed by both sexes, and lasts about three weeks. The chicks leave the nesting area when only a day or two old, and when concealed in long marram-grass are not easily discovered.

**Food.**—Chiefly small fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* A hollow in bare sand or amongst a scanty growth of short plants. Sometimes on shingle or bare rock. *Materials.* Usually none. Sometimes a few pieces of dead herbage, occasionally a liberal supply of dry grass.

**Eggs.**—Usually 2, sometimes 1 or 3. Creamy white to warm buff, spotted, blotched or streaked with deep sepia or rich reddish brown and grey. Some eggs are finely speckled, and in others the markings form a zone. *Size.* About  $2\cdot1 \times 1\cdot4$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—A sharp *kirkitt*, *kirr-wit* or *kweek*.

## ROSEATE TERN

*Sterna dougallii*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown and nape black; back and wings ash-grey; tail pale ash-grey, the outer margin of the elongated feathers white. Under parts are rosy pink. Bill black, red at base; legs red; irides dark brown. Length, about 16 inches. *Sexes alike.* The distinctive colour of the bill, the pink under parts and the great length of the outer tail feathers distinguish this bird from the Common and Arctic Terns, to which it bears a resemblance. *Young.* Crown and nape blackish; forehead is streaked with white; upper parts mottled with brown. There is a white collar round the hind-neck.



*Photo: Jasper Atkinson*

### Roseate Tern

numbers. Breeds in North Wales, where there is one large colony and another much smaller. A few pairs nest at the Farne Islands, and occasionally breeding is recorded in other localities in England. Has recently been found nesting in Ireland in three localities. Elsewhere a vagrant.

**Habits.**—The beautiful bird arrives at its breeding stations later than the Common and Arctic Terns, appearing very late in April. Most of the birds apparently depart as soon as the young are able to fly, for Roseate Terns are rarely seen after the close of August or the early part of September. This Tern is usually found breeding on rocky islands, which are often shared with the Common and Arctic Terns, and the

## COMMON TERN

ests may be scattered amongst those of the other two birds or grouped together. Although clutches of two eggs are not unusual, this would appear to be the exception rather than the rule, the normal number being only one. The number of eggs laid, however, possibly varies from season to season.

**Food.**—Apparently chiefly fish.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On rock ledges, in hollows among rocks, sometimes sheltered by vegetation; less frequently met with on shingle or sand. *Materials.* Usually none, but sometimes the hollow is carelessly lined with a little grass or other vegetable matter.

**Eggs.**—1 or 2. Usually light stone-colour, which is said to vary but little. The markings consist of spots of brown of varying shades and grey, often taking the form of a belt round the larger end. *Size.* About  $1\cdot7 \times 1\cdot15$  inches. *Time.* May and June. Very careful identification is necessary, the only sure means being to watch the bird on to the eggs, which may otherwise be easily confused with those of the Common and Arctic Terns.

**Notes.**—*Krr-ee*, a harsh *crrark*, and *che-wick* or *chew-it*.

## COMMON TERN

*Sterna hirundo*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper part of head black, as is also the nape. Back and wings pearl-grey, the primaries marked with dark grey. The deeply forked tail is white, except the outer webs of the two longest feathers, which are ash-grey. Chin, cheeks, throat and under parts white, the latter slightly suffused with grey. Bill bright red, tipped with black; legs carmine red; irides are dark brown. Length, about 14 inches.

*Sexes alike.* Differs from the Arctic Tern in having the cheeks and throat white, the under parts paler, and the bill tipped with black. After the autumn moult the black on the fore-part of the crown becomes mixed with white.

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**Young.** Upper parts darker than in the adult and mottled with buff ; fore-part of crown buff ; hind crown and nape brownish black. Bill nearly black ; legs dull red.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and apparently also a passage-migrant. It breeds in a number of places on all our coasts both on the mainland and islands, but rarely in the Outer Hebrides. It is uncommon in the Orkneys, and was not known to breed in the Shetlands until 1901. In some parts of the north of Scotland it is less numerous than the Arctic Tern, but in the south of Great Britain it is easily the more abundant species ;

Common Tern.

whereas, in Ireland, the Arctic Tern outnumbers the Common Tern.

**Habits.**—The earliest arrivals reach the south of England about mid-April, and birds continue to pass northwards until the middle of May. In Scotland and Ireland this Tern is not usually seen before May. The return migration extends from August to October, but most of the birds have left by the end of September. During the migratory movements Common Terns are seen both on the coast and at inland waters, and often travel in small flocks. The species is gregarious at all times, and some of the nesting colonies are very large. Breeding commences rather earlier than in the case of the Arctic species. When feeding, this bird flies slowly over the water, and having sighted a fish, hovers with

## ARCTIC TERN

oidly beating wings before dropping obliquely, and striking the water with considerable force, rises with its capture held firmly between the mandibles.

**Food.**—Small fish and aquatic insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a hollow amongst shingle, sand, stunted vegetation or rocks. *Materials.* Dry grasses and other vegetable substances. Often laid on bare sand or on rock without any attempt at a lining.

**Eggs.**—2 or 3. Light stone or buff to olive-brown, blotched and spotted, sometimes boldly, with blackish brown and with ash-grey. *Size.* About  $1\cdot7 \times 1\cdot15$  inches. *Time* May and June, but chiefly in the latter month. Slightly larger than eggs of the Arctic Tern, usually less boldly marked, and lacking the green tinge often present in those of the allied species. Many eggs, however, are indistinguishable.

**Notes.**—A long-drawn *pirre* or a rapid *kip*.

## ARCTIC TERN

*Sterna paradisaea*

**Description.**—*Male.* The bird closely resembles the preceding species, but the cheeks and throat are pale grey and the bill wholly red, while the under parts are greyer. Legs red; toes are blackish brown. Length, about 14 inches. *Sexes alike.* After the autumn moult the under parts are paler and the fore-part of the crown is sprinkled with white. *Young.* Only distinguished from those of the Common Tern by the dark grey outer tail feathers.

**Distribution.**—Summer resident and probably also a passage-migrant to and from breeding grounds beyond our shores. In England and Wales nests on the Farne Islands, Holy Island, on some islets off Anglesey and in a few other localities. In Scotland it is much more numerous, nesting around all coasts as well as on the islands, including the Orkneys and Shetlands. In the Outer Hebrides it

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

breeds more commonly than any other species of tern. In Ireland it nests commonly on the coasts and in some inland localities.

**Habits.**—The Arctic Tern first appears on the coast of Kent about the middle of April, but most of the birds reach

us at the end of that month and early in May. Scotland is not usually reached until about the middle of May. The return migration lasts from August to October. The birds migrate in a leisurely way, pausing to feed at various suitable spots as they travel to or from the



Arctic Tern

nesting places. Although the Arctic Tern has not many breeding stations in England and Wales, it is numerous as a passage-migrant to the northern parts of our area, and often wanders inland. This Tern is perhaps rather less partial to fresh water than the Common Tern, although it has some inland breeding quarters. In its general habits it does not differ greatly from its congener.

**Food.**—Small fish, insects and their larvae, small crustaceans.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* The sites selected differ little from those chosen by the Common Tern. *Materials.* Usually none, but sometimes a few pieces of grass, a little seaweed or a few bents are found in the hollow containing the eggs.

**Eggs.**—2, occasionally 3. Pale bluish green to brownish buff, sometimes reddish brown or pale blue, blotched and spotted with different shades of brown and grey. *Size.* About  $1\cdot55 \times 1\cdot1$  inches. *Time.* Late May and in June.

## LITTLE TERN

ary more in ground-colour and markings than Common  
terns' eggs.

Notes.—Krr-ee, kerrr or a rapid tip.

## LITTLE TERN

*Sterna albifrons*

Description.—*Male.* Forehead white; crown and nape are black. A broad black streak passes from the beak through the eye. Upper parts pearl-grey, except the rump, upper tail-coverts and tail feathers, which are white, and the outer primaries, which are blackish, the inner webs showing pale margins. Sides of neck and under parts dusky white. Bill orange-yellow, tipped with black; legs orange; tarses dark brown. Length, about 12 inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished by its small size and white forehead. *Young.* Upper parts barred and mottled with brown, but rump, upper tail-coverts and tail feathers greyish white. The crown and nape are brownish black; bill and legs are smaller than those of the adult.

Distribution.—A summer visitor, the bird nests in scattered

colonies of varying size in many suitable parts of the coast throughout the British Isles. In Scotland it is somewhat rare, although widely distributed, and known to breed both in the Outer Hebrides and Orkneys. In no part of the British Isles are the colonies very large. Frequently occurs land during passage movements in spring and autumn.

Habits.—The Little, or Lesser Tern arrives in the south



Little Tern

about the middle of April, but it often does not reach the Scottish breeding stations until the second week in May. The majority of birds forsake the breeding places in August and the overseas passage is nearly at an end by late September although a few birds may remain until early October. The Lesser Tern shows a decided preference for the mainland nesting on shingle-banks and stretches of sand. It rarely if ever, breeds on rocky portions of the coast. The nests are seldom placed very close together, and where there is a wide extent of sand or shingle, several small colonies are sometimes established within a comparatively limited area. When placed on shingle, the eggs harmonize well with their surroundings, and are by no means easily discovered, except by watching the bird on to the nest, but when laid on sand their resemblance to the environment is much less marked.

**Food.**—Small fish and crustaceans.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* A hollow in sand or shingle. *Materials.* Small pebbles or broken shells, but the depression, whether in sand or shingle, is often unlined.

**Eggs.**—2 or 3. Light stone to pale brown, spotted and blotched with dark brown and grey. *Size.* About 1·25 × .95 inches. *Time.* May and June. Distinguished from eggs of all other terns by their small size.

**Notes.**—A sharp *peer-err*, a short *kip-kip* or *kweek, kweek*, also a rapid *tirro-ee*.

## SABINE'S GULL

*Xema sabini*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and upper neck are dark slate grey, a narrow black collar dividing the dark hood from the white of the lower neck. Back and wings light ash-grey, the black outer primaries inwardly edged with white and showing conspicuous white tips. The forked tail is white as are also the under parts. Bill black, tipped with yellow; legs brownish black; irides dark brown. Length, about

## LITTLE GULL

3 inches. *Sexes alike.* The dark hood is lost after the autumn moult, when the head becomes streaked and suffused with grey. *Young.* Upper parts ashy brown, mottled with lighter shade. On each side of the breast is a large patch of greyish brown. The tail has a terminal black band, and is more forked than that of the Little Gull. Rest of plumage white.

**Distribution.**—Scarce autumn and winter visitor, occurring almost annually on east coast of England, chiefly off Norfolk and Yorkshire. Occasional visitor elsewhere in England, and is seen rarely in Scotland and Ireland. Sometimes visits us in spring and summer, but very infrequently. Most of the birds which reach our shores are immature, adults being very scarce.

## LITTLE GULL

*Larus minutus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and upper part of neck black, forming a hood. Mantle and wings pale grey, the primaries edged and tipped with white; under surface of wings lead-blue. Rest of plumage white, with a pinkish tinge on the breast. Bill brownish red; legs vermillion; irides brown. Length, about 11 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the forehead is white, the crown and nape pale grey. There are a few black streaks behind the eye. Bill and legs duller. *Young.* Upper parts brown, variegated with buff and white; cheeks brown; primaries mostly blackish, under side of wing white. The tail shows a terminal band of black. Birds in the second year are distinguished by a broad black band on the wing, and black tips to the outer tail feathers are all that remain of the black bar. Upper parts greyer. This bird is smaller than the Black-headed Gull, with which it may be confused, except in summer plumage, when the deep black hood is very distinctive.

**Distribution.**—Autumn and winter visitor, occasionally

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occurring in spring and summer. Rather irregular in its visits. Occurs chiefly on the east coast of England, less frequently along the southern seaboard. Rarer on the west coast and in Ireland. Sometimes seen inland.

**Habits.**—The Little Gull is most frequently noticed during the passage movement in September and October. It occasionally appears in large numbers, and is sometimes observed in small parties. The species has been seen associating with Arctic Terns. A large proportion of the bird's food consists of insects which are captured on the wing.

**Food.**—Aquatic and other insects, small fish, molluscs.

**Notes.**—*Kayee, kayee, kayee.* Also utters a low *tok, tok, tok*, or a soft *ke, ke, ke.*

### BLACK-HEADED GULL

*Larus ridibundus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Chin, throat and fore-part of head coffee-brown, forming a hood. Behind the eye there is a

small area of white. Back and wings pearl-grey, but the outer primaries have black tips, and there is a broad margin of white along the front edge of the wing. Rest of plumage white. Bill and legs bright red; the irides brown. Length, about 16 inches. *Sexes alike.*

The dark brown hood is absent in winter.

when parts of the head are blotched with grey. Distinguished in all seasons by the red bill and legs, and the white margin to the wing. *Young.* More or less mottled with brown according



Black-headed Gull

## *BLACK-HEADED GULL*

o age. The brown markings are most numerous on the upper parts. The hood is absent, and there is a blackish band at the extremity of the tail.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and also passage-migrant. Breeding colonies are established in many suitable localities throughout the British Isles, including the Shetlands and Outer Hebrides. Has greatly increased during recent years. In winter more generally distributed, and may be seen in large numbers on all our coasts, while many birds wander inland at this season.

**Habits.**—The Black-headed Gull resorts to lakes, tarns, bogs and sandhills for nesting purposes. The colonies are of varying size, some containing perhaps not more than twenty or thirty pairs of birds, while others are so large that any estimate of the number of nesting birds is a matter of conjecture. The gullery at Ravenglass, in Cumberland, is undoubtedly one of the largest in the country, and here many thousands of gulls congregate for the purpose of rearing their young. Although often found breeding near the sea, the Black-headed Gull also nests in many inland localities. In winter the birds congregate in great numbers on the coast, and at this season many hundreds travel inland, where they haunt large rivers and lakes. A number of non-breeding birds are to be observed on the coast all through the summer. This species is very bold at the breeding colony when the nests contain eggs or after the young are hatched, and the birds will then swoop fearlessly at the head of an intruder who approaches the nests or any wandering chicks too closely.

**Food.**—Earthworms, insects, crustaceans and molluscs. Occasionally grain, fish or birds' eggs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a tussock of coarse grass or rushes, on floating vegetation, and amongst marram-grass or nettles. *Materials.* Sedges, reeds and grass, used in small or large quantities. Sometimes the eggs are laid on the ground without any attempt having been made to form a nest.

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Eggs.**—3, occasionally 4. Stone colour to olive-brown or olive-green, and occasionally pale blue or light greenish. The markings consist of spots and blotches of blackish brown and dark grey. **Size.** About 2·2 × 1·45 inches. **Time.** April to June.

**Notes.**—A harsh, screaming *quarr* or *kraah*.

### COMMON GULL

*Larus canus*

**Description.**—**Male.** Head and neck pure white. Back and wings pale grey, the latter tipped with black, conspicuous white spots marking the black area. The rest of the plumage is white. Bill and legs yellowish green; irides brown. Length is about 18 inches. **Sexes are alike.**

**Young.** Upper parts greyish brown, mottled with white. The upper tail-coverts, however, are white, spotted with brown. Tail white, with a broad black terminal band. Under parts mottled with ash-brown. The larger



Common Gull

size, and coloration of the bill and legs distinguish the young from those of the Black-headed Gull.

**Distribution.**—Resident, winter visitor and also passage-migrant. Breeds commonly in Scotland and Ireland, but very rarely in England. Nesting has occurred on the Farne Islands, on the English side of the Solway and at Dungeness, Kent, during recent years. In winter it is commonly and widely distributed around all our coasts, where young birds are frequently seen all through the summer, especially in the

## COMMON GULL

orth. There are gulleries in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, so in the Orkneys and Shetlands.

**Habits.**—The Common Gull breeds in colonies on low coasts, and on fresh-water lochs the bird nests up to an elevation of over 2,000 feet. It breeds both on the mainland and on islands. Some birds arrive as winter visitors from the continent, and at this season the bird is seen inland as well as on the coast. The Common Gull and the Black-headed species are found sharing the same breeding ground, but nest in separate colonies. This Gull is gregarious at all seasons, and the winter flocks are sometimes very large. The Common Gull may at once be distinguished from its rather smaller relative, the Black-headed Gull, by the more leisurely wing-beats, the two species sometimes being confused when in winter plumage, or even when in summer dress, the term "Common" as applied to the bird under notice being misleading, as it is the rarer of the two species, at all events, during the summer months.

**Food.**—Insects, worms, fish, crustaceans, molluscs, and occasionally grain and small birds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground amongst coarse grass or heather, sometimes in a hollow in short turf or on a rocky ledge. *Materials.* Heather, seaweed, dead grass, rushes. Occasionally very little material is employed.

**Eggs.**—3, sometimes 4. Buff to dark olive-brown, occasionally pale blue or of a light greenish hue. The markings, which take the form of spots, blotches and streaks, are blackish brown and grey. *Size.* About  $2\cdot25 \times 1\cdot65$  inches. *Time.* May and June. Larger than those of the Black-headed Gull, and the spots are usually smaller.

**Notes.**—The alarm-cry has been written *kak, kak, kak*, or *yak, yak, yak*. The bird also utters a kind of squeal.

## HERRING-GULL

*Larus argentatus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck white. Back and wings light grey, but the outer quills are black, with white tips. Under parts snowy white. Bill yellow, with a red spot on the lower mandible. Legs are flesh-colour; irides are yellow. Length is about 24 inches.

*Sexes alike.* Bears a general resemblance to the Common Gull, but the much larger size, and colour of the legs and bill are distinctive. *Young.* General colour greyish, closely mottled with brown. The tail is white, with a blackish band. Bill black; legs grey. Dis-



Herring-Gull

tinguished from young of Lesser Black-backed Gull by their paler appearance.

**Distribution.**—Resident and partially migratory. Breeds along all coasts of the British Isles where the cliffs are sufficiently high, and also found nesting inland on lochs and bogs. In winter becomes more generally distributed on the coasts and often wanders inland.

**Habits.**—The Herring-Gull is more evenly dispersed than a nesting species than any other gull breeding in the British Isles. Although sometimes nesting inland, it is for the most part a maritime species. The bird appears to be to a very large extent resident throughout the year, although it is certainly a partial migrant to the Continent, but decidedly more sedentary than the Lesser Black-backed Gull, apart from migratory movements within the British Isles. In winter numbers of birds move southwards within our area.

## **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**

avelling northwards in April and May. The Herring-Gull gregarious at all seasons, although isolated nests may sometimes be found. Flocks of immature birds are common on the coast throughout the summer, and these are not frequent in localities at a distance from any breeding colony. This Gull sometimes follows the plough, when it will associate with Black-headed Gulls, Common Gulls and Rooks.

**Food.**—Fish, small birds and mammals, insects, worms, the young and eggs of large birds, crustaceans, molluscs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On ledges of precipitous sea-cliffs, on grassy or rocky islands, and sometimes in bogs. *Materials.* Heather stalks, seaweed and turf, lined with dry grass.

**Eggs.**—2 or 3. Stone-colour, olive-green or greenish in ground-colour, spotted and blotched with dark brown and grey. *Size.* About 2·85 × 2·0 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Hau-hau-hau, ky-eok* or *wow-ow-ow*. The bird so utters a mewing cry.

## **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**

*Larus fuscus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper part of back very dark slate-grey, as are also the wings, some of the quills being slightly tipped with white, and the secondaries and scapulars have white tips. Rest of plumage white. Bill yellow, with a red spot on the under mandible; legs yellow; irides straw-colour. Length, about 23 inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished from the Great Black-backed Gull by its small size and yellow legs. *Young.* Upper parts dark brown, mottled and streaked with white. Under parts greyish brown. Bill and irides dark brown; legs brown.

**Distribution.**—Most of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls which breed in the British Isles appear to spend the winter in more southern regions beyond our shores, but a very few

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may remain through the winter. The Scandinavian Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus fuscus*) reaches us as a passage-migrant and winter visitor. This bird is darker on the mantle than the British form. Our breeding bird nests



**Lesser Black-backed Gulls**

in the Isle of Wight, Devon, Cornwall, Lancashire, Cumberland, Westmorland and Northumberland, as well as on the Farne Islands, on the coasts and islands of Wales, and also inland and in many parts of the mainland of Scotland, as well as on its islands. In Ireland it is rarer than the Herring-Gull, but breeds inland on some lakes and bogs, and on some of the islands off the coast. More widely distributed on our shores during the autumn and spring migration, when it often appears inland.

**Habits.**—The Lesser Black-backed Gulls which nest in the British Isles reach us in late February or early March, the return migration lasting from August until October or even November. Non-breeding birds may frequently be observed on all our coasts during summer. This species is much more often seen inland in spring and autumn than the Herring-Gull, for many birds travel overland as well as along the coast. The gulleries of the Lesser Black-back are usually separate from those of the Herring-Gull, but a few pairs sometimes nest amongst colonies of the latter bird. The Lesser Black-backed Gull frequently follows vessels in company with the Herring-Gull, when it will travel considerable distances from land.

**Food.**—Very much the same as that of the Herring-Gull.

## GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

**Neat.**—*Situation.* In a hollow amongst turf, amongst grass growing in nooks and on ledges of rock, on bare rock upon a collection of dry seaweed. *Materials.* Heather twigs, seaweed, grass and moss. Sometimes no material is used, the eggs being laid in a hollow amongst grass.

**Eggs.**—2 or 3. Very like those of the preceding species. When the two species are breeding together, the only sure method of identification is to watch the birds to the nests. *Size.* About 2·6 × 1·85 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Ha, ha, ha, or an, an, an*; also *ky-eok*.

## GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

*Larus marinus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Back and wings slaty black; the primaries, scapulars and secondaries tipped with white. Head, neck, rump, tail and under parts pure white. Bill yellow, marked with red on the lower mandible. Irides yellow; legs pale flesh-colour. Length, about 24 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. Very like those of the Lesser Black-backed Gull, but much larger. The bill is bigger and the legs longer.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Breeds sparingly on the Cornish coast, in the Scilly Isles, on Lundy Island, in Wales and the Lake District. In Scotland nests abundantly both on the mainland and islands, and in Ireland it is increasing, being most abundant on the west coast. More widely distributed in winter around all coasts.



Great Black-backed Gull

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Habits.**—The Great Black-backed Gull nests on sea-cliffs, rock-stacks, and on islets in lakes. Most of the colonies are on the coast, and the habit of nesting inland must be regarded as somewhat exceptional. The birds breed in colonies, but as a rule these are not very large, although over a hundred pairs have been known to nest in company. Isolated nests are by no means rare. Very little is known of the migration of this Gull, but there is a considerable increase in its numbers after the nesting season, which suggests that immigrants reach us from northern breeding grounds beyond our shores. A general southward movement is noticeable within the British Isles in winter. The bird is rarely seen inland except during the nesting season.

**Food.**—Very similar to that of the Herring-Gull, but it feeds upon larger mammals and birds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On ledges of maritime cliffs, on the summits of rock-stacks, on islets in lakes and on marshes or moors. *Materials.* Seaweed, heather, wool and dry grasses in variable quantities.

**Eggs.**—2 or 3. Stone-colour to light olive-brown, blotched and spotted with dark brown and different shades of grey. *Size.* About  $3\cdot1 \times 2\cdot1$  inches. *Time.* May and June. Distinguished from those of the Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls by their large size.

**Notes.**—A deep *og, og, og*, or *ugh, ugh, ugh*.

### GLAUCOUS GULL

*Larus hyperboreus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Mantle pale grey; wings similarly coloured, but the primaries are tipped with white. Rest of plumage white. Bill yellow, with an orange patch on the angle of the lower jaw; legs bright pink; irides yellow. Length, about 29 inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished from the Herring-Gull by absence of black on the primaries and tertiaries.

## KITTIWAKE

much lighter grey of the upper parts. *Young.* Pale buff, streaked and mottled with greyish brown. Bill, legs and irides brownish. With advancing age the plumage gradually becomes paler until the adult stage is reached. Distinguished from young of other large gulls by the lighter colours.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor, but occasionally seen in summer. Most frequent on the east coasts of Great Britain as far south as Norfolk, in the Orkneys, Shetlands and Outer Hebrides, and in the north-west of Ireland. Elsewhere rare and irregular. It is sometimes abundant on the east coast, but the numbers are variable.

## ICELAND GULL

*Larus glaucopterus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Plumage closely resembles that of the Glaucous Gull, but this bird is considerably smaller, and its wings are longer in proportion to its size. Bill yellow, with a red patch at the angle; legs flesh-colour; irides yellow. Length, about 22 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Resemble those of the Glaucous Gull, but are said to be darker in their first winter.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Occasionally seen as late as April or May. Occurs in much the same localities as the preceding species, but is far rarer, although appearing fairly regularly. Sometimes numerous. Most of the birds which reach us are immature.

## KITTIWAKE

*Rissa tridactyla*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck white; back and wings bluish grey; the outer wing-quills having black tips, and these appear on the extended wing as a triangular black patch. The first two or three primaries are not tipped with

white, which distinguishes this bird from the Common Gull during flight. Tail and under parts white. Bill greenish yellow; legs black; irides brown. Length, about 15 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young. Crown and nape grey; back and wings mottled with brown, the latter crossed by a black band. There is more black on the primaries than in the adult bird, and the tail terminates in a broad black band.



Kittiwake with Young

**Distribution.**—Resident and winter visitor. Breeds on the coasts of Wales, in the Isle of Man, on Lundy Island, on the Cornish coast, and in a few spots on the east coast of Great Britain, namely, Flamborough Head, the Farne Islands, the Bass Rock, the Isle of May, Dunbury (Aberdeen) and a few other places. Nests numerously on high sea-cliffs of the main

land and islands of the north and west of Scotland, especially in the Orkneys, Shetlands and Hebrides, and also on many precipitous cliffs in Ireland, where, however, it is local. In winter generally distributed on all the coasts of Great Britain, but at this season it is apparently uncommon in Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Kittiwake is not found breeding along low-lying coasts, all the colonies being situated on precipitous cliffs. In winter it resorts to the open sea, and at this season its numbers are increased by the arrival of immigrants. This species is rarely seen inland. The birds generally reach their breeding places in March, although nesting operations do not commence until May. Some of the colonies are very large where there is available accommodation. Many nest

## GREAT SKUA

are placed so low down on the face of the cliffs that they are within reach of the spray of the waves, others are situated on higher ledges. There is a general southward movement of Kittiwakes in autumn, the birds returning northwards in March. This Gull frequently gathers in huge flocks in winter.

**Food.**—Small fish and crustaceans principally.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On ledges of sea-cliffs or in crevices; sometimes in sea-caves. *Materials.* Seaweed, grasses and other plants.

**Eggs.**—2 or 3. Greyish, buffish brown or stone-colour, blotched and spotted with ash-grey and brown. Sometimes the markings form a zone. *Size.* About  $2\cdot15 \times 1\cdot6$  inches. *Time.* May and June. The size of the eggs prevents confusion with those of any other cliff-breeding gull.

**Notes.**—Kitt-aa or kitti-aa. Sometimes a sharp *kit, kit.*

## GREAT SKUA

*Stercorarius skua*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head umber-brown, the paler neck feathers having light brown shafts. Back, wings and tail-coverts dark brown, streaked with light reddish brown. A light patch, which is formed by the white bases to the inner webs of the primaries, is conspicuous on the extended wing. The primaries are blackish brown towards the tips. Tail-quills very dark brown, the central ones slightly longer than the rest. Under parts dusky rust-colour. Bill and legs black; irides dark brown. Length, from 21 to 24 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Resemble adults, but the neck-streaks are less conspicuous.

**Distribution.**—Nests in the Shetlands, where there are two large colonies and several smaller ones, and in these islands it has increased greatly during recent years owing to efficient protection. A few pairs have nested in Orkney

since about 1914. Uncommon winter visitor to other parts of our coasts, chiefly on the east side of Great Britain, but it is doubtful whether all the birds seen in winter are from the British breeding stations.



**Great Skua**

**Habits.**—The Great Skua, or Bonxie, arrives at its breeding places in late March or early April. These are situated on high moorland ground, and are often near those of the Arctic Skua, but the Great Skua does not breed so far inland. The nests are usually placed some distance apart. In August the birds forsake their breeding haunts. This Skua readily attacks a human intruder approaching its eggs or young. The method of attack is to swoop from a height at a great speed, and when the bird is sufficiently close, it strikes the

back of the offender's head with its feet. When the blow has been delivered the bird shoots upwards and circles round in preparation for a renewed onslaught. Dogs venturing near nests are also immediately attacked. This bird's method of obtaining food is similar to that of the other members of the family, a description of which will be found in the article devoted to Richardson's Skua. The intrusion of gulls, crows or other large birds into the territory of Great Skuas is greatly resented, moreover, one pair of Skuas will drive off other birds of their own species from the vicinity of their nest. Incubation is undertaken by both sexes.

**Food.**—Largely fish; also young and eggs of other birds, crustaceans, molluscs and carrion.

## POMATORHINE SKUA

**Nest.**—*Situation.* A depression in the ground amongst moss, short coarse grass or stunted heather. *Materials.* Dead grass and pieces of moss.

**Eggs.**—2. Light buff to dark olive-brown, occasionally olive-green, sparsely spotted and blotched with dark brown and greyish brown. *Size.* About 2·85 × 1·95 inches. *Time.* May and June. The eggs are not unlike those of the Lesser Black-backed and Herring-Gulls, but the markings are fewer and duller.

**Notes.**—*Ag-ag*, and *skua* or *skeerr*.

## POMATORHINE SKUA

*Stercorarius pomarinus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, nape and fore-part of cheeks black. Hind-neck, throat and hind part of cheeks yellow; back, wings and tail umber-brown. The two central tail feathers, which are longer than the rest, are twisted vertically, and the ends are broad and rounded. Breast and fore-neck dull white, the lower feathers of the latter barred with black, forming a band which becomes less pronounced as age advances. Upper flank feathers and abdomen umber-brown. Bill greyish black, the cere tinged with blue; legs and irides, dark brown. Length, about 21 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Upper parts sooty brown, mottled and barred with reddish brown and black; under surface greyish brown, streaked with dark brown. The central tail feathers only are slightly elongated.

**Distribution.** Passage-migrant and scarce winter visitor. Young birds sometimes occur in summer. Fairly regular in autumn, especially on the east coast of England, but not so frequent on the east side of Scotland. On the south and west coasts of Great Britain and off the Irish coasts, decidedly scarce. On rare occasions visits us in large numbers in autumn. Much rarer during spring migration, although

sometimes frequent in the seas of the Outer Hebrides. Occasionally driven inland during stormy weather. In winter a few remain at sea off the south coasts.

## RICHARDSON'S SKUA

*Stercorarius parasiticus*

**Description.**—Plumage variable. There are two more or less distinct forms, a light and a dark phase. The two extreme forms inter-breed freely, so that intermediate varieties are common. *Male.* The plumage of the dark form is almost

uniform dark sooty brown, but the upper parts are suffused with slate-grey, the crown is dull black, and the ear-coverts and the sides of neck are tinged with bronze-yellow. In the light variety the slate-grey on the upper surface is rather more noticeable. The throat, under parts and sides of neck are white or creamy white, and this colour extends nearly to the nape, where it is tinted with yellow. Some birds display a brownish or cream band across the breast.

Bill bluish lead colour at base,

blackish elsewhere ; legs black ; irides hazel. The central tail feathers are elongated. Length, about 20 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Both forms sooty brown, the feathers margined with rufous, giving a barred appearance.

**Distribution.**—Summer resident and passage-migrant. Nests numerously in the Shetlands, at a few places in the Orkneys, in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, and very sparingly



Richardson's Skua

## RICHARDSON'S SKUA

Sutherland and Caithness. Elsewhere occurs as a passage-grant, chiefly in autumn, and is sometimes seen in great numbers, particularly off the east coast of Great Britain. On the west coast it occurs regularly, although rarer than on the east side. Apparently less frequent on the south coast and in Ireland.

**Habits.**—Richardson's, or the Arctic Skua, reaches its nesting grounds late in April, departure taking place in August and September. Egg-laying commences rather later than in the case of the Great Skua, namely, towards the close of May or in early June. Incubation is shared by male and female. This Skua exhibits the piratical habits characteristic of its congeners. Although no doubt quite able to catch fish for itself, it rarely, if ever, does so. Terns, Gulls and Auks which have effected a capture are relentlessly pursued with great speed until the fish is either dropped or disgorged, when the Skua usually catches the food before this reaches the water. Should the bird fail to do so, as a rule, the fish is abandoned. After the breeding season, Arctic Skuas are generally found at sea, where they follow flocks of Gulls or other sea-birds from which they obtain their food supply.

**Food.**—Fish, eggs and young of other birds, carrion, insects, crustaceans, berries and worms.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Similar to that chosen by the Great Skua. *Materials.* Dry grass and moss. Sometimes the hollow is unlined.

**Eggs.**—2, rarely 3. Olive-green to olive-brown, irregularly dotted and blotched with brown and greyish brown. *Size.* About  $2\cdot8 \times 1\cdot62$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—Mee or mee-awk.

## BUFFON'S SKUA

*Stercorarius longicaudus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead, crown and nape blackish brown. Back, wings and tail slaty brown. Cheeks, neck, throat and upper part of breast whitish, tinged with yellow on the cheeks and sides of neck, and with grey below the fore-breast, the latter colour being darkest on the flanks and abdomen. The two central tail feathers, or streamers, are greatly elongated, far more so than those of the Arctic Skua. Bill bluish on cere, tip blackish; legs olive-grey; irides deep brown. Length, including the streamers, about 23 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* Plumage sooty brown above, the mantle and upper tail-coverts mottled with buff. Under parts greyish white, barred with brown.

**Distribution.**—Irregular autumn migrant. Occasionally seen in spring and summer. Most often noticed on the east coast of England, but generally in small numbers. Exceptionally numerous. Rare on the south and west coasts, and in Scotland and Ireland. Sometimes observed inland. Buffon's Skua, or the Long-tailed Skua, as it is often called, is decidedly rarer than the Pomatorhinine Skua. The bird most frequently appears in September and October.

## RAZORBILL

*Alca torda*

**Description.**—*Male.* Crown, nape, back, wings and tail glossy black, with the exception of a narrow white wing-bar. Chin and throat dark brown. Breast and under parts white. Bill black, grooved and much decurved towards the tip; a white line crosses the mandibles and another extends from the bill to the eye. Legs brownish black; irides dark brown. Length, about 17 inches. *Sexes alike.* In winter the throat, fore-neck and sides of head are white; upper parts less glossy than in summer. The white line from the bill to the eye very indistinct. *Young.* At first resemble the adult in summer.

## *RAZORBILL*

umage, but are browner. Bill smaller, and lacks the grooves and white lines. After the autumn moult resemble the adults winter dress, but the grooves in the bill are absent.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Nests on suitable cliffs throughout the British Isles. In winter its distribution is very similar to that of the Common Guillemot.

**Habits.**—The Razorbill frequents its breeding stations from late in March until August. During the remainder of the year it remains out at sea, keeping well away from land, except in rough weather, when it occurs in numbers close to the shore. Razorbills and Guillemots are often found breeding on the same cliffs, but whereas the Guillemot usually selects an exposed ledge or the flat top of a rock-stack, the

species under notice prefers to deposit its egg in a crevice. The two species may sometimes be found breeding side by side on the same ledge, but the Razorbill will occupy the portion which is overhung. Where crevices abound, the Razorbill often outnumbers the Guillemot. This species is an expert diver, and when resting on the waves floats buoyantly. Although only one egg is produced at a time, a second or even a third will be deposited if the bird is robbed.

**Food.**—Small fish, also crustaceans.

**Nest.**—None, the egg being laid on the bare rock in a crevice or on a ledge with projecting rocks above.

**Egg.**—1. White, buff, pale brown or reddish brown, rarely bluish green, blotched, spotted and smeared with bold and numerous markings of chocolate-brown, black or blackish



*Razorbill*

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brown. The spots sometimes tend to form a belt round the larger end, and in some specimens the ground-colour is almost obscured by the markings. *Size.* About  $2\cdot9 \times 1\cdot87$  inches. *Time.* May and June. Less pointed than the egg of the Common Guillemot, and less variable in ground-colour and markings.

**Note.**—A kind of grunting sound.

### COMMON GUILLEMOT

*Uria aalge*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck, back and tail dark greyish brown; wings similarly coloured, but secondaries tipped with white, which forms a narrow bar. The cheeks, chin and throat are more of a reddish brown. Under parts white. The pointed bill is black. Legs brownish black; irides brown. Length, about 18 inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished from the Razorbill by its pointed bill and the brown upper parts. In winter the cheeks, chin and throat are white, and a dark line passes through the eye to the ear-coverts. *Young.*

At first resemble the adult in their summer dress. The

plumage assumed in autumn is very like that of the adult in winter, but the cheeks and neck are marked with brown.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Nests numerously on suitable cliffs on all coasts throughout the British Isles. More abundant than the Razorbill, except in Ireland. In autumn



Common Guillemots

## COMMON GUILLEMOT

and winter remains out at sea, usually at some distance from land, and is fairly generally distributed, although uncommon in winter off the Irish coasts. Occasionally driven inland by stress of weather.

**Habits.**—The Guillemot breeds on sea-cliffs of the mainland and on isolated rock-stacks. Enormous colonies are found where there is sufficient accommodation, and on the flat summits of stacks such as the Pinnacles at the Farne Islands, the birds are huddled so closely together while incubating their eggs that they form a dense mass. In February and March this species moves towards its breeding stations, which are visited rather irregularly until April, when numbers of birds collect at the nesting sites. The cliffs are usually vacated during August. The Guillemot apparently pairs for life, returning each year to the same ledge for breeding purposes.

**Food.**—Chiefly small fish.

**Nest.**—No nest is made, the egg being deposited on the bare rock on ledges of steep cliffs, or on the flat top of a rock-stack.

**Egg.**—1. The ground-colour may be white, creamy, yellowish, reddish brown, pea-green, purplish brown or deep bluish green, and of many intermediate shades. The markings consist of spots, blotches, streaks or lines of black, dusky brown, greyish brown and other tints in great variety. Some specimens are marked with interlacing lines, while others are without markings of any kind. *Size.* About  $3 \cdot 25 \times 1 \cdot 95$  inches. *Time.* May and June. The egg of the Guillemot is pear-shaped, and varies more in ground-colour and in the nature of the markings than that of any other British bird.

**Notes.**—A growling kind of chatter. Note of young, *willock, willock*.

## BLACK GUILLEMOT

*Uria grylle*

**Description.**—*Male.* The whole of the plumage is greenish-black, with the exception of a large white patch on the wing-coverts. Bill black; inside of mouth red. Irides brown; legs vermillion. Length, about 14 inches. *Sexes alike.* In

winter the upper parts are barred with black and white, but the bars do not form defined lines, the plumage having a hoary appearance produced by the black and white merging. In some birds the head is almost entirely white. Wings as in summer; under parts white. There is a black patch in front of the eye. Plumage variable, probably according to age. *Young.* Plumage very like that of the adult in winter, but darker and more mottled. The white wing-patch is very indistinct. Legs dark brown.

Black Guillemot



**Distribution.**—Resident. Breeds commonly along the north and north-west coasts of Scotland and in the Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands; rarer in the south-west of Scotland. Nests sparingly in the Isle of Man. In Ireland it breeds locally on the coasts, most numerously in the north and west; rare on the east side.

**Habits.**—The Black Guillemot seldom wanders far from its breeding areas in winter, and is consequently of comparative rare occurrence in southern waters. Unlike the Common Guillemot, this species does not congregate in large colonies for breeding purposes. Except during the nesting season, it remains at sea, unless driven shorewards by stress of weather. The flight is straight and rapid, and the bird usually flies just above the water. Incubation is shared by the sexes, and

## LITTLE AUK

both parents feed the young. Only one brood is reared during a season.

**Food.**—Crustaceans and small fish form the main items of diet.

**Nest.**—No nest is formed. The eggs are deposited in deep crevices of sea-cliffs or beneath boulders at the foot of a cliff. Occasionally in a cave.

**Eggs.**—2. White or tinged with blue, green or cream. The spots and blotches are ash-grey and blackish brown, and sometimes form a zone. **Size.** About 2·35 × 1·6 inches.

**Time.** Late May or in June.

**Note.**—A plaintive whine.

## LITTLE AUK

*Alle alle*

**Description.**—*Male.* The black upper parts are relieved by white edgings to the scapulars, a narrow wing-bar formed by the white tips of the secondaries, and a white spot over the eye. Throat and fore-neck white, as is the rest of the under parts. Bill black; irides brown; legs greenish grey. Length, about 7½ inches. *Sexes alike.* Distinguished from its congeners by small size and short bill. *Young.* Distinguished by absence of white spot over the eye.

**Distribution.**—Winter visitor. Most frequently observed in Scotland and on the east coast of England, but occurs from time to time off all coasts of the British Isles.

**Habits.**—The visits of the Little Auk are irregular, but occasionally it occurs in very large numbers. The bird is usually present with us from mid-October to mid-March, but exceptionally has been recorded as late as June. From November to January it is, however, generally most abundant. During stormy weather many are often driven on to the coast or to localities far inland.

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**Food.**—Chiefly small crustaceans.

**Notes.**—The call has been written *rett, tet, tet, tet, or perre, te-te-te, tett, tett, telt.*

## PUFFIN

*Fratercula arctica*

**Description.**—*Male.* Cheeks and throat are dirty white; forehead, crown, nape, a ring round the neck and rest of upper surface, black. Under parts, white. Bill, bluish grey

on basal portion, outer part rich orange, crossed by three transverse grooves. At the base of the upper mandible is a ridge of pale yellow, and at the gape there is a rounded wattle of orange skin. Legs orange; irides grey. Length, about 12 inches. *Sexes alike.* In autumn the ridge at the base of the upper mandible and the blue plates on the basal portion of the beak are shed, the size of the bill consequently being reduced. The colouring of the beak is



Puffins

duller in winter. *Young.* There is a blackish patch in front of the eye, the bill is smaller than that of the adult and the bright colouring is lacking. Cheeks darker.

**Distribution** —Resident. Nests sparingly in the Isle of Wight and on the coasts of Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, numerously on Lundy Isle, off Devon, and on the Scilly Isles. On the Welsh coast, both on the mainland and islands, it breeds abundantly in many places. A few breeding stations are situated on the east coast of Scotland, but on the east

## PUFFIN

side of England it nests only on the Farne Islands and at Flamborough. Breeds commonly on the west coast of Scotland, and at many points on the Irish coasts.

**Habits.**—The Puffin is a summer visitor to its nesting stations, commencing to arrive near our shores in March, and departing in August or September. A few remain in British waters during the winter, but at this season Puffins are seldom observed near land. Very little is at present known as to the movements of this species in winter. During stormy weather it is sometimes driven inland. In April the Puffin commences to work at the nest-burrow, using its feet to scrape out the earth. Many birds, however, do not prepare a new hole, returning to that used in previous summers. A good deal of quarrelling often takes place for the possession of the burrows. Rabbits' holes may be appropriated by some birds, but the majority excavate for themselves. Where there is sufficient accommodation the colonies are often very extensive. The Puffin associates with Guillemots and Razorbills, but owing to its proportionately longer wings, appears more graceful when in the air. It is an expert diver, and under water propels itself with the wings alone.

**Food.**—Mainly fish and crustaceans.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a burrow under the turf and near the top of a cliff, or on an island. Sometimes under boulders or in a natural cavity in the rock. The burrows vary in length. *Materials.* Sometimes grass, seaweed or roots are used, but often the egg is laid on bare soil.

**Egg.**—1. Rough in texture and dull white, generally with a zone of grey or reddish brown spots. *Size.* About  $2\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{6}{7}$  inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—A long-drawn *o-r-r, owk, ow*, or *a-r-r*.

## GREAT BUSTARD

*Otis tarda*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck pale grey. At the base of the lower mandible is a tuft of long whitish bristles. Lower part of neck rusty brown, barred with black; centre of fore-neck buff. Upper parts rusty yellow, barred with black, the tail edged and tipped with white. The wing-coverts are mostly white; primaries black. Under parts white. Bill slate-grey, with a dark tip; legs and irides brown. Length, about 43 inches. *Female.* Considerably smaller. Upper parts more conspicuously barred with black; lower part of neck white. Lacks the conspicuous white bristles. Length, about 30 inches. *Young.* Resemble female, but are paler, and the wing-coverts and secondaries are barred with blackish.

**Distribution.**—Rare wanderer in winter to southern and eastern counties of England, at times arriving in considerable numbers. The last invasion was in 1890-1891. Formerly nested in a wild state on Salisbury Plain, the Sussex downs, the Yorkshire wolds, and in Norfolk, Suffolk and other parts of England, also in south-east Scotland. The last nest was found in East Anglia about 1838. Attempts have been made to re-introduce the Great Bustard, but have met with little success.

## LITTLE BUSTARD

*Otis temminckii*

**Description.**—*Male.* Throat, cheeks and chin bluish grey. Two white lines pass down the sides of the black neck, and meeting in a point in front are succeeded by a band of white, followed by one of black. Head sandy brown, streaked with black; upper parts brown, marked with fine curving lines of black. Outer wing-coverts white, as are also the under parts. Bill horn-coloured, dusky at tip; legs yellow; irides reddish brown. Length, about 17 inches. *Female.* Chin whitish; neck buff, mottled and barred with black. After

## CORNCRAKE

the autumn moult the male resembles the female, the distinctive neck-pattern being lost. *Young.* Resemble the female, but are more heavily barred on the breast and upper tail-coverts.

**Distribution.**—Rare winter visitor. Occasionally seen in spring. Occurs chiefly in the eastern counties of England and in Cornwall. Less frequently observed in other southern counties of England. Very rare elsewhere, but has occurred both in Scotland and Ireland.

## CORNCRAKE

*Crex crex*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts yellowish brown, streaked with dusky brown; wing-coverts are rich reddish brown; primaries dark reddish brown. Tail chestnut, the feathers having dark centres. There is a band of ash-grey over the eye, this colour extending to the cheeks and throat. Under parts pale yellowish brown, the flanks barred with two shades of reddish brown. Bill light brown; legs yellowish brown; irides hazel. Length, about 10 inches. *Female.* Colours on cheeks and wings less distinct. *Young.* Plumage resembles that of the adult, but the grey is replaced by yellowish brown and the flanks are tawny brown, indistinctly barred.



Corncrake

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**Distribution.**—Summer visitor, also occurs on passage. A few remain through the winter. Widely distributed, but has decreased of late years in Southern England and in the Midlands, although still numerous in the north and in Scotland and Ireland. Breeds commonly in the Outer Hebrides and Orkneys, and is also found in the Shetlands.

**Habits.**—The Corncrake, or Landrail, arrives in the south of England during the latter part of April, but does not reach the northern counties until the first or second week of May. In the Shetlands it does not appear until late in May. The return migration occurs chiefly in September, but some birds remain until October or even November. A few birds are recorded in most winters, especially in Ireland and the Outer Hebrides. The Corncrake is common and more generally dispersed in the southern counties of England during the spring and autumn migration. The curious rasping notes of the Landrail frequently betray its presence when otherwise it would escape notice, for like its relative, the Water-Rail, it is a bird of skulking habit. The cry is uttered frequently during the night or early morning hours, but also at other times. Fields of long grass are the favourite haunts of this Rail, but it also frequents clover and cornfields, and sometimes marshy situations.

**Food.**—Insects and their larvæ, worms, seeds and snails.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In mowing grass or in clover, sometimes among marsh plants or even stinging nettles. Said to nest occasionally amongst corn. *Materials.* Grass stems and leaves form the foundation, the lining consisting of fine grasses. A slight hollow is scratched out in the ground.

**Eggs.**—7 to 10 or more. Light buff or pale reddish white, irregularly spotted and blotched with reddish brown of varying shades. The underlying markings are ash-grey. *Size.* About 1·4 × 1·1 inches. *Time.* May and June onwards, even to September.

**Note.**—*Crake-crake.*

## SPOTTED CRAKE

*Porzana porzana*

**Description.**—*Male.* Upper parts olive-brown, streaked with black and streaked and spotted with white. The white spots are most numerous on the face and neck. There is a bluish grey band over the eye. Throat slate-grey; fore-breast spotted with white; breast and belly buffish white; flanks greyish brown, broadly barred with white. Bill yellowish, red at base; irides reddish brown; legs green. Length, about 9 inches. *Sexes alike.* *Young.* The grey which appears on the head, throat and breast of the adult is replaced by dull brown, and the flanks are less broadly barred with white.

**Distribution.**—Summer visitor and also passage-migrant. Occasionally remains throughout the winter. During recent years breeding has rarely been recorded, but owing to its retiring habits this species is liable to be overlooked. Possibly still nests occasionally in East Anglia, Yorkshire, the Trent Valley, and Brecon, in some of the southern counties of England, and perhaps in some districts of Scotland and Ireland. Also occurs outside its possible breeding areas as a scarce but regular passage-migrant.

**Habits.**—Bogs and marshes form the haunts of the Spotted Crake, which is said to be even more skulking than the Water-Rail, and rarely flushed even by a dog. When compelled to take wing, the bird flies low with feet dangling, and travels only a short distance before seeking cover. The migratory movements of this species, which appear to be performed at night, prove that it is capable of prolonged flight. The summer visitors often arrive in March, the return movement occurring in October.

**Food.**—Aquatic insects, small molluscs, worms, vegetable matter and seeds.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On swampy ground covered with rank

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

vegetation. Often on a large tussock more or less surrounded by water, or amongst reeds or other aquatic plants. *Materials.* Reeds and flags, lined with dry grasses. Usually a substantial structure.

**Eggs.**—8 to 12. Buff, sometimes tinged with brown blotched and spotted with dark reddish brown and underlying markings of grey. Size. About 1·3 × ·9 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—*Whuit, whuit, or trick-track, trick-track.*

### LITTLE CRAKE

*Porzana parva*

**Description.—Male.** Upper parts tawny brown, except the rump, which is black. The back is streaked with black and white. Sides of neck, cheeks and under parts light slate-grey, the abdomen barred with white. The short bill is green, red at base; irides red; legs green. Length, about 8 inches. **Female.** Throat white; under parts buff, the abdomen barred with white and greyish black.

**Distribution.**—Chiefly a passage-migrant in spring and autumn, but must be regarded as a vagrant. It has occurred in various southern counties of England, and very rarely in Scotland and Ireland.

### BAILLON'S CRAKE

*Porzana pusilla*

**Description.—Male.** In general appearance resembles the Little Crake. Upper parts brown, streaked with black and white. Cheeks and a stripe over the eye dark slate-blue, as are also the under parts; flanks and under tail-cover black, barred with white. Bill as in the preceding species.

## WATER-RAIL

irides red; legs are olive-green. Length, about 7 inches. *Female.* Resembles the male, except on the under parts, which are considerably lighter.

**Distribution.**—Occurs as a vagrant, chiefly in spring and autumn, but occasionally in summer and winter. More frequent than the Little Crake. Most of the records are from Norfolk, but the bird has visited many other counties of England, and has also been met with in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. It is said to have nested in Norfolk and Cambridge many years ago.

## WATER-RAIL

*Rallus aquaticus*

**Description.—Male.** Upper parts reddish brown, streaked with black, the crown more olive. Tail feathers dusky, as are also the wing primaries, and both have light margins. Cheeks, throat, breast and sides of neck bluish grey; flanks boldly barred with black and white; abdomen buff. Bill long and red in colour, which features distinguish this bird from the other rails. Legs and irides are reddish brown. Length is about 12 inches. **Sexes alike.** *Young.* Upper parts more olive than in the adult; throat, centre of breast and abdomen brownish white. Throat slightly spotted with brown.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Apparently also a winter visitor and passage-migrant. Local, but breeds in most marshy



Water-Rail

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

localities in England and Ireland, also in Southern Scotland  
More widely dispersed in winter.

**Habits.**—The Water-Rail is a bird of secretive habits, so that its migratory movements are difficult to study. It is found throughout the year in suitable districts, and apparently some of our breeding birds migrate in autumn, arrivals from the north of Europe reaching our east coasts, chiefly in October. Marshy ground overgrown with dense vegetation forms the favourite haunt of the species, which is by no means a rare bird in many localities, although its love of remaining hidden undoubtedly causes it to be frequently overlooked. The notes, however, are distinctive, and naturalists familiar with the sounds should experience no difficulty in detecting the bird. The Water-Rail swims with ease, and will sometimes overcome its customary shyness sufficiently to venture into open water, but rarely wanders far from cover, to which it immediately hastens if alarmed. The bird has the power of compressing its body, and this enables it to pass rapidly through dense aquatic vegetation.

**Food.**—Insects, worms, berries, seeds, molluscs and vegetable matter.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Well concealed in a tussock of rushes amongst reeds or other dense water-plants; sometimes in long grass. *Materials.* Flags, sedges and reeds.

**Eggs.**—6 to 11. Creamy white, sparingly spotted with dark reddish brown and marked with underlying dots of grey. *Size.* About  $1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Time.* April to July.

**Notes.**—A soft *whit*. Also an explosive kind of yell harsh in sound.

## MOORHEN

*Gallinula chloropus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck and under parts dark greyish black; back, wings, rump and upper part of tail olive-brown. Under tail-coverts white, and there is a line

## MOORHEN

nite on the flanks. Bill red at base, greenish yellow at tip. There is a bright red shield on the forehead. Legs green, with a red and yellow "garter" above the heel; irides red. Length is about 13 inches. *Sexes are alike.* Young upper parts greyish brown, reddish on the scapulars. Under surface greyish white. Bill and shield olive-green.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Numerous and generally distributed throughout the British Isles.

**Habits.**—The Moorhen, or Waterhen, is subject to local movements, but decreasing towards winter in the more northern parts of Great Britain and

becoming commoner in the south. In Ireland there appears to be little local migration. There is evidence of passage movements on a slight scale in autumn and spring. Birds are sometimes taken at lighthouses. The Moorhen frequents lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, or even wet ditches. Around lakes and large ponds where there is sufficient cover available, numbers of pairs nest within a limited area, but small sheets of water usually only accommodate one or two pairs. If unmolested, this species become remarkably fearless, and is a familiar bird in many of the London parks and those of other cities. It often feeds in fields or on marshlands at some distance from open water, but in the country is usually shyer than in towns, and if approached too closely will run hurriedly to the nearest cover.



MOORHEN

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

The Moorhen is less frequently seen on open water than the Coot. Supplementary nests are constructed near that containing eggs, but these additional structures are less finished.

**Food.**—Aquatic plants and insects, molluscs, worms, grain.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually near water, and placed among flags, sedges, rushes, or in low bushes. Sometimes on the branch of a tree overhanging the water, or even in a tree at considerable height. The species has been known to occupy the old nest of a Magpie, Wood-Pigeon, or other bird at some distance from water. *Materials.* Dead flags, reeds and rushes, lined with dry grass and water-plants.

**Eggs.**—6 or 7 to 10. Buff or reddish buff, spotted and speckled somewhat unevenly with reddish or purplish brown of varying shades. *Size.* About 1·7 × 1·2 inches. *Time.* March to August.

**Notes.**—*Crek-rek-rek* or *krex*, and numerous variations.

## COOT

*Fulica atra*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and neck black, rest of plumage dark slate-grey, with the exception of a narrow white band across the wing, which, however, is only noticeable during flight, and narrow line of white beneath the eye. Bill whitish tinged with pink. On the forehead is a smooth naked white patch known as the frontal shield. Irides crimson; legs olive-green. Length, about 15 inches. *Sexes alike.* Young similar to adults, but the upper parts are browner, and the throat and under parts are dirty white, as are also the sides of the face.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Fairly generally distributed throughout the British Isles, and very abundant in some parts.

**Habits.**—The Coot frequents lakes, large ponds, sluggish rivers and reservoirs in the breeding season, but during severe

## COOT

inter weather many resort to tidal waters, and at this season a good deal of local movement is apparent in inland districts, the bird often appearing in large numbers on waters which only harbour a few breeding pairs. Although not nearly so frequently seen on land as the more familiar Waterhen, the Coot both walks and runs with ease. The bird obtains much of its food by diving, although it is not so expert in this art as many other water-fowl. This species is very gregarious in winter, when the flocks sometimes contain hundreds of birds.

**Food.**—Aquatic plants, grass, worms, grain, molluses and aquatic insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Among reeds, rushes or other water-plants, on the edges of lakes, large ponds, or wide sluggish rivers. An islet is often selected when available, and extensive marshes adjoining large sheets of water often attract many nesting pairs. *Materials.* Dead flags, reeds and rushes. The structure is built up to a height of a foot or more when in a wet situation.

**Eggs.**—7 to 10, occasionally up to 15. Greyish stone-colour or dull buff, spotted and speckled evenly with purplish or blackish brown. *Size.* About  $2\cdot1 \times 1\cdot5$  inches. *Time.* April to July.

**Notes.**—A clear ringing *kho*, and a softer *tsuit* or a sharp clinking sound.



COOT

## CAPERCAILLIE

*Tetrao urogallus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head, neck, back, rump and upper tail-coverts brownish black, speckled with grey. Scapulars and wing-coverts reddish brown, finely spotted with black. Secondaries dark chestnut-brown, speckled with dusky mark-



Capercaillie

ings; primaries blackish. The rounded tail is dusky, with a terminal band of white in fully mature birds. Greater tail-coverts are tipped with white. Throat feathers black and these are elongated; upper breast dark glossy green, lower breast and underparts black, the abdomen more or less

spotted with white. Flanks grey, marked with white. Bill pale horn-colour; irides hazel; legs covered with brown hair-like feathers. Above the eye is a patch of naked red skin. Length, 33 to 40 inches. *Female.* General colour tawny brown, barred and mottled with black, buff and white. The plumage bears a resemblance to that of the Greyhen, female Black Grouse, but the rounded tail is barred with black, and there is a rufous patch at the base of the neck. Length, 22 to 25 inches. *Young.* Closely resemble the female.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Confined to Scotland. Became extinct in Scotland and Ireland towards the end of the eighteenth century, but was re-introduced from Sweden into Perthshire in 1837, and later into many other districts. It has now spread over the forests of the Midlands and extended its range to many other parts of Scotland.

**Habits.**—The Capercaillie is mainly confined to forests

## *BLACK GROUSE*

conifers, but has spread to woods of oak, birch and other deciduous trees. It is a stationary species, and apart from range extensions, seldom wanders from its usual haunts, except during severe weather, when the birds retreat from the higher ground to the lower woods, or wander into cornfields or tracts of heather beyond the forest areas. The species is polygamous, and has been known not infrequently to inter-breed with the Black Grouse.

**Food.**—Buds and shoots of various trees ; fruits, berries, grain and insects are also eaten.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground, generally at the foot of a tree. Sometimes under a bush or beneath a fallen tree, at other times among thick heather or long grass. *Materials.* Pine needles, dead grass or leaves ; sometimes a few feathers.

**Eggs.**—6 to 8, occasionally up to 15. Yellowish in ground-colour, spotted and speckled with reddish brown. *Size.* About  $2\cdot2 \times 1\cdot6$  inches. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—Male. *Peller, peller, peller.* Female. *Gock, gock, gock.*

## *BLACK GROUSE*

*Lyrurus tetrix*

**Description.**—*Male.* General colour black, glossed with blue. The primaries are brownish black. The wing is crossed by a white bar, and the under tail-coverts are white. Over the eye is a bare patch of bright red skin. The feathers of the vent, thighs and legs are dark brown, mixed with white. Tail feathers elongated and curved outwards. Bill and toes black ; irides dark brown. Length, about 22 inches. From July to September the male becomes browner on the upper parts, and at this time he loses the ornamental lyre-shaped tail feathers. *Female.* Reddish buff, barred and speckled with black. The markings are largest on the breast,

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

where the feathers show greyish white edgings. Distinguished from female Capercaille by smaller size and forked tail. Length, about 18 inches. Young. Resemble the female at first, but the males soon develop an outward curve

to the tail feathers, and are further distinguished by a good deal of black in the plumage.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Breeds locally in all the northern counties of England, north of Derbyshire, in the northern midlands, northwest Lincolnshire, in the English border counties and many parts of Wales. Also nests locally in Devon, Somerset and Dorset, but is said to be almost extinct in Cornwall.

Nest of Black Grouse

wall. Generally distributed on mainland of Scotland and also breeds in some of the Inner Hebrides. Has been introduced in many other parts of the British Isles, usually with little success.

**Habits.**—The Black Grouse is a sedentary species and seldom wanders far from the areas where it is indigenous, or from the centres of introduction. The borders of moors, where the open heathland gives place to more wooded country, scattered with pines, alders, birches, gorse and juniper, form the favourite haunts of the Blackcock. It frequents the lower slopes of the hills in preference to more elevated ground, and is often found on swamps overgrown with rushes and other coarse herbage. The species is polygamous, and at pairing time numbers of males assemble at a chosen spot, fighting pugnaciously for the possession of the females.

## **RED GROUSE**

**Food.**—Berries and wild fruits, heather shoots, grain, seeds and insects.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground, sheltered by heather dead bracken, rushes, brambles or coarse grass. In woods and plantations or on rough boulder-strewn ground, and sometimes in open pasture-land. *Materials.* Dry grass, leaves, dry bracken or fern-fronds form a thin lining to the selected hollow.

**Eggs.**—5 to 10. Yellowish white, sometimes tinged with red, sparingly spotted with reddish brown. *Size.* About  $2\cdot0 \times 1\cdot4$  inches. Smaller than Capercaille's eggs, which they otherwise resemble. *Time.* April to June.

**Notes.**—Male. A loud cooing, followed by a hissing sound. The response of the female is a plaintive note.

## **RED GROUSE**

*Lagopus scoticus*

**Description.**—*Male.* The plumage is variable. The general colour of the upper parts is reddish brown, speckled and barred with black. Primaries and tail-quills blackish brown. Chin and throat rich chestnut - brown and unspotted. Breast dark reddish brown, sometimes nearly black, remainder of under surface is a light reddish brown, as are also the flanks. Feathers of the flanks and the under parts below the breast, tipped with white. There is a scarlet wattle above the eye. Legs and



Red Grouse

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

toes covered with short greyish white feathers ; bill black ; irides hazel. Length, about 16 inches. *Female.* Lighter reddish brown, and sometimes more spotted than the male. Often shows buff markings. Smaller than male, and the membrane over the eye is less extensive. *Young.* Closely resemble the female in her breeding dress.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Generally distributed in Scotland, including the Western Isles and Orkneys, but does not occur in the Shetlands. It also breeds in Monmouth, Hereford and Salop, and northwards from Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire. General in North Wales, but scarcer in the south. Widely distributed in Ireland, although not numerous. Introductions have been made from time to time in various parts of Great Britain.

**Habits.**—The Red Grouse is strictly a moorland bird, although an abundance of heather is not essential to its presence, for it is common on some moors almost devoid of this plant, but where the crowberry flourishes, a species being of somewhat similar form. The bird is sedentary, and, except for local movements from the higher ground in winter, seldom strays far from its usual haunts. The Red Grouse, unlike the Blackcock, is monogamous, and although rival males challenge one another during pairing time, they do not gather to fight at a selected spot. The female alone incubates, and although the young are well tended, the mortality is often very high, wet seasons being especially disastrous.

**Food.**—Tender shoots of heather and crowberry, wild fruits, grain and seeds of sedges. The young feed upon insects, and grass or heather shoots.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* A hollow in heather, less frequently in rushes or coarse grass. *Materials.* A few heather shoots, also dead grasses and moss.

**Eggs.**—7 to 12 or more. Dirty white, cream or pale reddish white, thickly spotted and blotched with deep

## PTARMIGAN

reddish brown. More profusely marked than the eggs of the Ptarmigan. Size. About 1·75 × 1·25 inches. Time. April to June chiefly.

Notes.—Male. *Cabow, cabow, gobak, gobak, beck, beck, cockaway, cockaway.* Alarm note of male, *cock, cock, cock.* Note of female, *yow, yow, yow.*

## PTARMIGAN

*Lagopus mutus*

Description.—*Male.* In summer the head, upper parts and flanks are black, mottled and barred with rusty brown and grey; chin and throat white; breast brown, slightly mottled with rufous, and remainder of under parts white. Wings white, the shafts of the quills black; tail feathers black, tipped with white. Bill black; irides are hazel; the feathers of the legs and toes dull white. Above the eye is a piece of erectile skin, vermillion in colour. Length, about 15 inches. *Female.* The

plumage shows more rusty brown and black and less grey than in the case of the male. The dark portions of the wing-quills are broader, and the red wattle smaller. In winter the plumage is uniform white, with the exception of the black lores, a black stripe behind the eye, and the black tail feathers and quill-shafts. There is no black on the head of the female, except in cases of very old birds. *Young.* Resemble the female, but the primaries are brownish black.



Ptarmigan

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

**Distribution.**—Resident. Confined to Scotland. Breeds on the highest mountains from Ben Lomond northwards. A few nest in Skye, Jura, Lewis and Harris.

**Habits.**—The breeding haunts of the Ptarmigan are at much greater altitudes than those of the Red Grouse, generally at from 2,000 to 4,000 feet, where there is little vegetation beyond stunted heather, mosses and other dwarfed mountain plants. During winter Ptarmigan descend to the lower ground, but apart from these seasonal movements, are stationary. The bird is monogamous, but the female alone incubates, although the male remains on guard, never straying far from the nest, and assists in the rearing of the young. The hen is usually a very close sitter, and both sexes will feign injury in order to detract attention from their young.

**Food.**—Lichens, mosses, shoots of alpine plants; cranberries and other mountain fruits.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a hollow amongst heather or other stunted vegetation found growing on rock-strewn ground. *Materials.* A few pieces of heather, scraps of moss and a little dry grass. Sometimes the hollow is unlined.

**Eggs.**—7 to 10 or 12. Greyish white to pale reddish brown, blotched and spotted with blackish brown. The markings are generally darker and fewer than in the case of eggs of the Red Grouse. *Size.* About 1·7 × 1·1 inches. *Time.* May and June.

**Notes.**—Ack-ack-ack or ee-ack, at other times a loud and prolonged kind of croak.

## PHEASANT

*Fasianus colchicus*

**Description.**—*Male.* Head and upper part of neck steel-blue, with purple, green or bronze reflections. There are two erectile ear-tufts, and the skin of the face is red and devoid of

## PHEASANT

feathers. Mantle golden red, marked with bands of buff, black and red, the feathers tipped with purple. Under parts golden red, except the abdomen, which is dusky brown. Feathers of fore-neck and breast margined with black. Rump and upper tail-coverts red-maroon; wing-quills greyish and yellowish brown. Tail olive-brown and barred with black. Bill yellowish horn-colour; legs brownish grey; irides hazel. Length, about 35 inches. Plumage varies owing to cross-breeding. One variety

shows a white ring round the neck. *Female.* Buffish brown, barred with black. Tail much shorter. *Young.* Resemble the female, but are duller.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Introduced into Britain before 1066. Generally distributed, but absent from Orkneys and Shetlands. It is local in Wales, and scarce in Ireland in parts where it is not preserved.

**Habits.**—The Pheasant is so carefully preserved that many birds have come to be regarded as almost semi-domesticated. Although the bird does not shun the haunts of man when these adjoin some woodland retreat, it often retains much of its wild nature, preferring the seclusion of woods and plantations, to which it at once retreats if disturbed while feeding in more open country. The Pheasant spends most of its time upon the ground, but roosts in trees, a habit which has undoubtedly been formed as a safety measure. The flight is very rapid, although not sustained, and it is doubtful whether the bird is capable of remaining on the wing for any length of time. In its wilder state this species is mono-



Pheasant (Female).

## THE POCKET BOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

gamous, but in a semi-domesticated condition the bird is polygamous.

**Food.**—Grain, seeds, beech-mast, berries, acorns, insects, earthworms and ants' eggs.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* On the ground in woods or on their outskirts, sheltered by long grass, dead bracken, bramble or other rank vegetation. Sometimes in hedgerow bottoms at some distance from woods or in long heather on commons.

*Materials.* A few dead leaves, dry grasses and other vegetable matter form the lining to a slight depression.

**Eggs.**—8 to 14. Uniform olive-brown, sometimes tinged with green or bluish green. *Size.* About 1·87 × 1·4 inches.

*Time.* April to June, sometimes later.

**Notes.**—Male. A loud *cock-cock* uttered two or three times in succession. Female. A shrill piping whistle.

### COMMON PARTRIDGE

*Perdix perdix*

**Description.**—*Male.* Forehead and cheeks bright rust-colour; crown and back of neck cinerous brown. Wing-coverts and lower back pale buff, mottled with two shades of reddish brown, the central line of each feather pale buff and unmarked. Wing-quills brown, barred with buff; tail-coverts and two central quills brown, barred with rust-colour, remaining feathers rusty red. Chin and throat bright rust-colour; breast and flanks bluish grey, speckled with darker grey; on the breast is a horseshoe-shaped patch of dark brown and the flanks are barred with the same colour. Bill and legs bluish grey; irides brown. Length, about 13 inches.

*Female.* The rust-colour on the head is duller and less extensive, some of the wing-coverts are barred with buff, and the dark brown breast-patch is smaller or may be absent.

*Young.* The parts which are grey in adults are buffish brown. There is little rust-colour on the head.

## COMMON PARTRIDGE

**Distribution.**—Resident. Generally distributed, but local in Scotland and uncommon in Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Common, or Grey Partridge, is most abundant on cultivated land, but is also found, although less numerously, on commons, moorlands, upland pastures, or on downlands bordered with rough hedges or dotted with may-thorn, bramble and other bushes. Although in some parts of the country the Partridge occurs at an elevation of about 1,200 feet, generally speaking, it is a bird of the lowlands. There is little evidence to suggest any regular migratory movements, but the bird does not appear to be entirely stationary in our islands. Family parties remain in close company throughout the winter, but the coveys break up in February, when pairing commences, and by the end of that month the mated couples have betaken themselves to their own particular territory.

**Food.**—Young shoots of grass and clover, spiders, beetles, ants and aphides.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* Usually in hedge bottoms, amongst rough grass or weeds on a bank, in clover or other crops, under a bush or amongst dead bracken. Usually well concealed. *Materials.* A little dry grass and a few dead leaves.

**Eggs.**—10 to 20. Pale olive-brown. *Size.* About 1·4 x 1·1 inches. *Time.* April and May or later.

**Notes.**—*Call.* Turwit. *Alarm.* Ajick, jick.



Common Partridge

## QUAIL

*Coturnix coturnix*

**Description.**—*Male.* The upper parts are streaked with yellowish white and their general colour is brown, but the back is blackish. There is a pale buff stripe dividing the dark brown of the crown, and a pale streak passes above the eye to the nape. Throat white, crossed by two dark brown gorgets; breast pale rusty brown, streaked with buff flanks brown, mottled with black and streaked with buff. Under parts yellowish white. Bill, legs and irides brown. Length, about 7 inches. *Female.* Resembles the male but is more speckled on the breast; the throat is uniform pale buff, and the black of the upper parts duller. *Young.* Closely resemble the female.

**Distribution.**—Summer resident. Now a scarce bird although subject to fluctuations. Formerly much more abundant. Visits all parts of the British Isles, including the Orkneys, Shetlands and Outer Hebrides. It occurs most frequently in the south of England and in the eastern half of Ireland.

**Habits.**—The Quail, unlike other game-birds, is migratory, travelling in flocks and reaching us in May. October is the favourite month of departure, although a few birds occasionally remain throughout the winter. Rough pasture and cultivated land are the usual haunts of this species. The bird is skulking in habits, for the most part remaining hidden amongst long grass, corn, clover or other dense cover so that the distinctive metallic call, said to be confined to the male, usually alone denotes the bird's presence. The Quail calls during the day, but is far more vociferous at night before sunrise. Incubation appears to be performed entirely by the female, but the male shares in the duties of guarding and tending the chicks.

**Food.**—Similar to that of the Common Partridge.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a hollow amongst grass, or among

## **RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE**

corn, clover and other growing crops. *Materials.* Blades of grass or a few dead leaves.

**Eggs.**—7 to 12, occasionally more. Pale yellowish brown or yellowish white, spotted, blotched and clouded with umber-brown, blackish brown or sepia. Some eggs show numerous small spots, at other times the ground-colour is almost concealed by large blotches. *Size.* About  $1\cdot14 \times .88$  inches. *Time.* May to July.

**Notes.**—*Male.* *Clik-a-lik* or *click-lik-lik*. The female utters a soft *few, few*.

## **RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE**

*Alectoris rufa*

**Description.**—*Male.* Whole of upper parts are dull brown, except the forehead, which is grey, and bounded on either side by a white supereiliary stripe. A black line passes from the base of the bill to the eye, and is extended so as to encircle the white face and throat. The grey forebreast is tinged with rufous and spotted with black. Breast and flanks lavender-grey, the latter barred conspicuously with black, white and chestnut. Rest of under parts warm buff. Bill and legs bright red; irides hazel. Length, about  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches. *Female.* Rather less brightly coloured, and there is no knob on the legs as in the male. *Young.* The forehead and flanks are mainly brown, as is also the gorget. Otherwise similar to adults.

**Distribution.**—Resident. Breeds in the eastern and southern counties of England as far west as Somerset, also in the Midlands and as far north as Yorkshire. Nests sparingly in North Wales. The species was originally introduced, and birds have in recent years been turned down, so that their appearance in new localities is not necessarily an indication of range extension.

**Habits.**—The Red-legged or French Partridge, although

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found on cultivated ground, appears to thrive best in the wilder districts. It favours sandy heaths, commons, hill-sides overgrown with rank grass, stony, barren ground and the more open parts of woods. Unlike the Common

Partridge, which usually seeks safety in flight, the red-legged species generally runs rapidly to the nearest cover, the coveys scattering in all directions if unduly alarmed, whereas parties of the Common Partridge remain intact. The nest of this bird is more frequently placed in an elevated situation than that of its commoner relative.

**Food.**—Much the same as that of the Common Partridge.

**Nest.**—*Situation.* In a hollow of a hedge bottom or beneath the shelter of a bush, amongst corn, clover, or long grass. Sometimes under cover of bramble

Red-legged Partridge



or other plants in woods, or in hay or cornstacks. *Materials.* Dry grasses and dead leaves.

**Eggs.**—10 to 18. Yellowish brown, buff or rufous in ground-colour, they are speckled and sometimes blotched with reddish or cinnamon-brown. *Size.* About 1·55 x 1·2 inches.

**Time.** April and May.

**Notes.**—Cockileke, dick-to-cher, or chuk, chuk, chukar.

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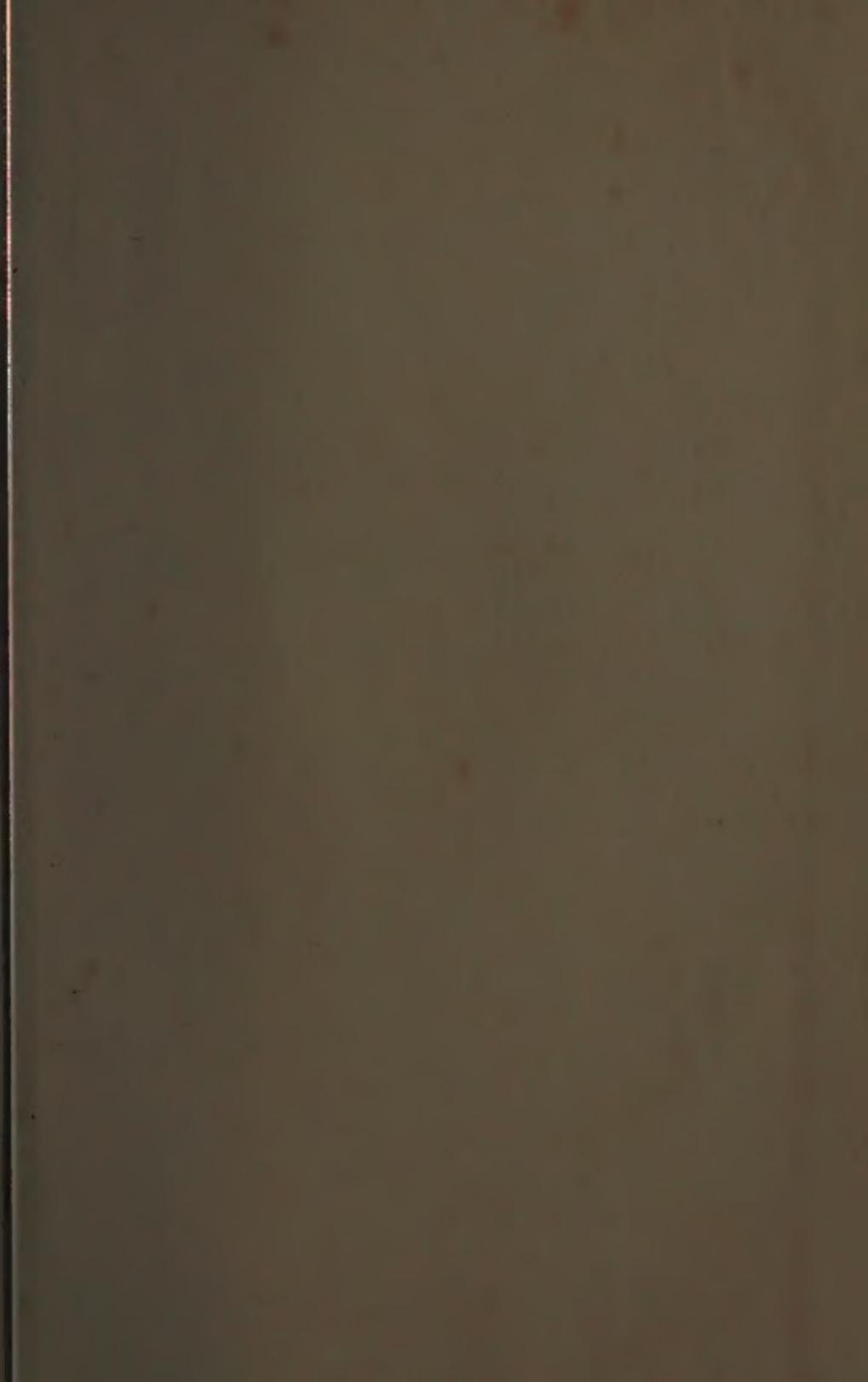
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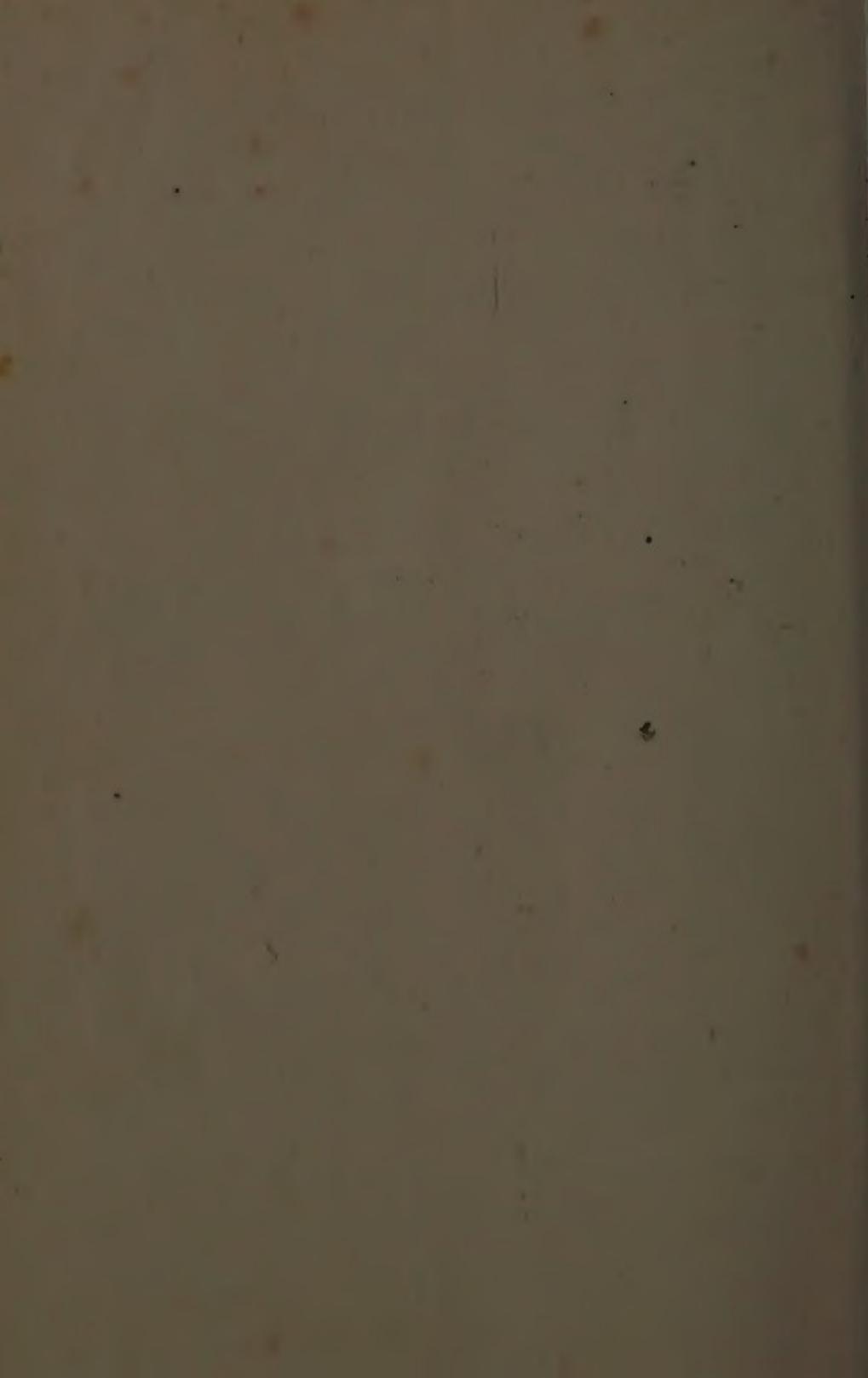
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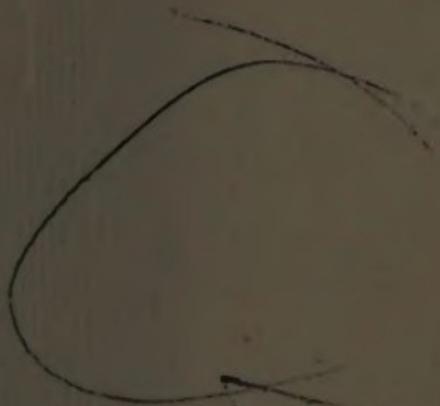
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